

Create a new you

This article was published on December 21, 2009 12:00 pm



Whether it's generating leads, closing deals or stepping up the corporate ladder, it's tough to achieve results without feeling positive. While the way you look is not a substitute for the knowledge and discipline you need to perform in your role, knowing you are 'branded' for success will boost your confidence. Get started with my action plan to create your personal brand.

How to use personal brand to support your professional expertise.

Dress for now

"If only I lost weight, had more time or paid off the debts..." Have you ever said that?

Waiting for the perfect circumstances is the highway to failure. Dress the body you have now and you'll instantly feel stronger. Sort out your wardrobe today and you'll stop wasting time over nothing-to-wear. Tweak the clothes you own and you won't overspend on new outfits.

ACTION: What is holding you back from creating a winning personal brand? Start in the next 7 days and follow it through!

Take the lead

At a time when the majority wears black, standards are often questioned and grooming has become relaxed, being known for immaculate presentation is a smart business move. Dress a cut 'sharper' and you'll be seen as 'promotable' when opportunity knocks. Look a bit 'edgier' and you'll be front- of- mind when prospecting.

ACTION: How can you 'take it up a notch'? Choose one thing at a time, like adding colour or accessorising better, and stick with it for a month to make it a habit.

Mind the context

Would you rate as trustworthy if you looked under- dressed or sloppy by comparison to a prospective buyer? Being over- dressed may also be alienating. As shallow as it feels, most people jump to conclusions based on what they see and the messages they interpret. Your appearance is a source of non- stop visual information. To connect with clients try to match your clothes to the audience expectations.

ACTION: What will they think of you when you walk into the room? Check your diary ahead of time and plan your outfit according to desired branding.

The secret of effective wardrobing

Have you ever been stuck with clothes you wish you didn't buy? There is a magic formula that will assist in making decisions about how and where you spend your money when it comes to fashion. You don't need to be Pythagoras to use it. It's simple and the best part is that you may never feel guilty again about purchasing that item you bought on a whim.

Count your CPW's – 'Cost Per Wear' & 'Cost Per Wow'

Cost Per Wear is a time- tested strategy of building a wardrobe cost- effectively. By taking the cost of an item and dividing it by how many times you expect to wear or have worn it, you get an idea of its real value. Basically, the more you wear it, the more it's worth it.

As an example, let's say you're in love with a stunning jacket that costs \$750 but you know you'll be wearing it at least twice a week for the next five years, then it really costs you \$1.44 each time you wear it.

Cost Per Wow is very similar but takes into account that what costs more should generally mean that you will get more out of it. If you have two different shirts, one worth \$20 and one worth \$200, then technically you should get ten times more wear and pleasure out of the \$200 shirt.

In a nutshell, it's quality that counts, not quantity. It's always better to invest in a classic piece than several inexpensive outfits. When you wear quality you feel better and when you feel better you project confidence.

What does your handshake say about you?

The question I am often asked by men in particular is, "I never know whether to shake hands with women". My answer is, "All the time". For men and women in a business situation, initiating a handshake shows confidence. We shake hands when meeting somebody and when saying goodbye. In my experience, however, very few people have ever received feedback on their handshake.

You can sell more with good business etiquette, so take the handshake test. Find a colleague you trust and invite them for a handshake. Do what you'd normally do when shaking hands. Shake a couple of times then freeze.

The person whose hand ended up being on top basically says "I'll be in charge from now on." What else has that handshake told you about that person? Was it a handshake of a confident man or a limp loser? The bone- crusher or the wet fish?

The idea is to create rapport through the handshake. Ideally we want a firm, friendly one. Extend your hand and grip the other person's hand so that it is palm to palm and web to web. Note that there is nothing worse than squeezing someone's fingers or making your handshake so gentle that other person is left wondering what happened to them.

Make eye contact. While this will vary from culture to culture, in Australia we expect the person shaking our hand to make eye contact with us. If possible, have something ready to say as you shake hands. It doesn't require anything witty. You can even use the old stand- by, "Pleased to meet you." Shake just a couple of times. The motion is from the elbow, not the shoulder. And end the handshake cleanly, before the introduction is over.

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