

## Professional finesse will save your job

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### Finesse your look

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If you ever wondered about the shortcuts of being successful, the reality is there are no shortcuts. Property Management is a competitive industry of hard workers and often quiet achievers. To sustain your career longevity in Real Estate, it is vital to differentiate yourself. Story by Elena Reed.

Being brilliant at what you do has become a minimum requirement of a down economy. Unless you build a strong, positive perception of yourself in the minds of your managers and clients, you'll be looked over as one of many thousands. Here are some of the areas where additional polish will give you presence, power and a competitive advantage.

#### Finesse your look

Would you trust a doctor with dirty finger nails? A financial advisor dressed as a rock star? Or a futurist whose wardrobe is stuck in the eighties? We all have certain expectations about what we want to see and feel when we meet a professional.

Property Management is no different. In order to be taken seriously you need to look appropriate for your role, your industry and public expectations. How you look reflects how you do business. There is no bigger statement on one's professional abilities than his or her attention to details.

Everything about you can evoke emotion. Your clothes, hair, shoes, accessories and grooming all project an image. Your presence is never neutral. Your appearance will be positive and support your message or negative and sabotage your chances.

#### How do you rate your look?

Here is a checklist to help you evaluate your finesse. Give yourself a score from 10 (perfectly professional) to 1 (woefully unprofessional) for each item.

#### Score yourself 10 = Perfect

Colour I wear colours that flatter my complexion  
 Style I know what works for my body shape  
 Accessories My accessories match my level of success  
 Occasion I am aware that being over- dressed is as bad as being under- dressed  
 right for all occasions  
 Hair I update my hairstyle every year  
 school  
 Fit I shop by fit and not by size  
 anyway  
 Shoes I polish my shoes religiously  
 Hands I visit a manicurist at least once a month  
 Grooming I check myself in a full length mirror before I leave the house  
 crumple there, I couldn't care less  
 Diary, pen, mobile It's little things that make the difference

#### 1 = Woeful

I only do black and white  
 I've worn the same clothing for years  
 I am not good at accessorising  
 I trust my best suit is  
 I've had the same hair- do since high school  
 I know it's a bit tight but I'll wear it  
 Shoes is the last thing on my mind  
 My hands are the hands of a gardener  
 A stain here and a  
 I buy my stationery from the supermarket

## Put your act together

Being a successful Property Manager is like running your own business based on the support of a larger organisation. The company you work for provides you with a vehicle but you are an engine in this vehicle. Employers buy YOU as a person. Landlords are interested in what YOU can personally offer. Tenants appreciate the service that YOU provide. On many levels, your success ratio is based on the other people's impressions of YOU.

Little things can have a huge impact on your reputation. Simple personal touches like remembering names, sending hand-written thank you cards and following through will mark you in people's memories in a 'sticky' way. Professional finesse comes down to what you stand for. If you look professionally, speak professionally and deliver professionally, your reputation will take care of you. It takes years to build a good name and only few inconsistent moves to stain it.

## Watch your physical self

You know when you are trying to concentrate and somebody is clicking a pen, coughing nervously or picking imaginary fluff from their clothes? Irritating gestures that we do unconsciously make others uncomfortable and inevitably take away from your credibility.

Becoming aware of your physical self is one of the best tools you can put in your career tool box. Non-verbal communication plays a huge role in how you connect with people and how you are perceived as a professional. Check through the What's Hot and What's not list to explore where you stand when it comes to using your body to your advantage.

### WHAT'S HOT

Handshake with confidence  
Up-turned palms open trust  
Trusting your outfit 100 %  
Using your hands purposefully  
Making good eye contact  
Speaking clearly and calmly  
Owning your physical space

### WHAT'S NOT

Handshake too weak or too strong  
Palms turned down signal dominance  
Fixing your jacket every time you move  
Touching your face or playing with hair  
Staring for far too long  
Mumbling words and looking away  
Constantly apologising

It takes more to succeed than just being good. When you mix your professional skills with a discipline to achieve, season it with charisma and finish it off with professional finesse, you'll have a perfect recipe for success.

## Get your team to follow your lead

Now you have "finessed" your look, you're dressed for success and have given attention to your physical presence and body language, but when you take a look around your office you feel your colleagues are letting you down. In order to raise your team's image, you'll need to deliver some feedback and we all know that's not as easy as it sounds!

What do you do when you have a staff member with the appropriate skill set, yet needs fine tuning in other areas? Ignoring ill fitting, unkempt clothing or other personal hygiene issues is not an option. After all, it is in your professional interest to have things tweaked before your team member meets with your client.

Giving feedback, particularly to the opposite gender, can be tricky. The process needs to happen in a sensitive manner, preferably without making the person feel uncomfortable.

Here are five easy steps, using Mark Hortsman's "feedback sandwich" technique, which will assist you to give sensitive feedback every time.

**Step One: Ask for permission.** Say: "May I give you some feedback?" Don't say: "I need to tell you something."

**Step Two: Comment on the choice they made and not the issue.** Say: "When you choose to [wear a shorter skirt/ style your hair traditionally/ relax your grooming (as in oral hygiene)]..." Don't say: "Your skirt is too short", "Your hair is dated", "You have bad breath."

**Step Three: Describe the negative consequences. The 'what happens is...' clause.** Say: "When you choose to wear the shorter skirt what happens is you make a personal statement rather than a professional one." "When you choose to style your hair traditionally what happens is others may wrongly judge you as being outdated." "When you choose to relax your grooming, as in oral hygiene, what happens is clients may get the wrong impression of you." **Don't say:** "Your skirt is too short. It makes you look cheap" "Your hair is dated. It makes you look old" "You have bad breath. It's hard to be around you"

**Step Four: Call to action** Say: "Will you be able to do something about it?" Then pause and listen. Don't say: "Can you change your skirt/ have a haircut/ see a dentist?"

**Step Five: Offer some tips if appropriate** Say: "By the way, here is the Dress for Success Checklist that helped many of our team members and I hope it may be of value to you too." Leave it there and change the subject Don't say: "I guarantee if you change your skirt/ cut your hair/ see a dentist..."

**Here is a sample of a team leader giving 'sensitive feedback':** Team Leader: May I give you some feedback? Staff Member: That's fine. Team Leader: When you choose to relax your grooming, as in oral hygiene, what happens is others may get the wrong impression of you. Will you be able to do something about it? Staff Member: Really? I brushed my teeth this morning! Team Leader: That's a great start. By the way, here is the Dress for Success Checklist that helped many of our team members and I hope it may be of value to you too."

Nine out of ten times your staff will get it and change their inappropriate behaviour. It's in everyone's best interest to be open yet gracious when offering feedback, to help them put their best foot forward.

Are you ready to deliver feedback but need some help? Download Elena Reed's free Dress for Success Checklist (Tips for Women and Men) at [www.sold-magazine.com.au](http://www.sold-magazine.com.au)

Feel free to print it and use it for your professional purposes as long as the content remains unchanged.

**Elena Reed** is a conference speaker and a corporate trainer specialising in image and business etiquette. She also runs regular webinars for real estate professionals to help them create winning image for career and personal success. For the latest schedule, visit

