

# The Connection



The Monthly e-newsletter of the Small Business Development Center

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TOPIC OF THE MONTH:

## **The 7 Worst "Don'ts" to Avoid for Your Personal Image**

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She came to me for help when it was too late.

The job interview over lunch for a mid level position in a real estate office was over. She didn't get the position. Yes, she was qualified, but her personal image got in the way.

She had done her homework: she researched the multinational company; showed up on time for the interview, but neglected one basic rule: Dress for the job!

Those of us in small business also need to keep in mind that although we run our businesses, our clients and prospective clients judge us based on image even more than employers judge their employees and interviewees.

How can this happen in this day and age? Unfortunately, it happens all the time, to both men and women. They don't get the work they deserve because they didn't project the right image. Since you only have five seconds to make a first impression, every wardrobe choice works for or against you.

Here are the 7 Worst "Don'ts" to avoid when trying to project a good image:

1. **Don't:** Buy a new suit just because it is in the latest style. Keep in mind that colors and styles need to fit your body type and what is in style is not always flattering or suitable to you.
2. **Don't:** EVER wear wrinkled fabrics. While appropriate for beach or sleepwear, wrinkles have no place in the business world.
3. **Don't:** Assume small details will go unnoticed. A fresh haircut, pristine nails and sharp looking shoes can take you a long way.
4. **Don't:** Do your own thing. Try mimicking the dress of your prospective clients. It's not okay to stand out and look different.
5. **Don't:** Think accessories don't count. Simple touches like using a good quality pen or carrying a leather briefcase distinguish you to your clients.
6. **Don't:** Wear inappropriate make-up. Save the glamour for a special evening out.
7. **Don't:** think that "more is more." Less is more. Avoid clunky jewelry, lots of rings, bracelets and big watches.

Dressing well for business takes planning. Buy the best quality you can afford. Peers notice, bosses notice, clients notice, your competition notices, too.

For a good personal image, consistency doesn't just mean always wearing a suit. It means that your image or persona has a head-to-toe consistency that establishes instant trust and gives you immediate credibility. In plain language, it means that all of the components of your image are in sync.

Without saying a word, you can be seen as either powerful or passive, as a leader or a follower. Your most powerful message may be the one without words: your image.

For more information on business image and business etiquette and appearance, visit [www.etiquettecentre.com](http://www.etiquettecentre.com).