

Creating an Impression

MASTER A PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE THAT PROJECTS CREDIBILITY AND CONFIDENCE

in a fast-moving business world you don't get a second chance to make a positive first impression. "People make quick judgments," says Courtney Feldman, owner of HIGHStyle Impression Management. "Make sure that first contact sends the right message."

Feldman created her company to offer one-on-one and group consulting and training on all aspects of establishing a polished professional image. Her programs cover four main complementary topics that work together to create an impression that represents your personal brand and speaks to your credibility. These topics include image and dress codes, both verbal and non-verbal communications, professional performance and confidence and social etiquette.

After working in post-secondary education, coaching undergraduate and MBA students on career management and workplace expectations, she saw a need in the wider community. Today, she provides in-person and online training services, assisting individuals and companies in presenting their best.

While her individual clients are often professionals who work in fields such as accounting, law, customer service and the hospitality industry, she says long-term advancement in any career depends on making a positive impression — and she stresses that doesn't necessarily mean blending into the crowd.

"We help our clients to

understand, 'What is your personal style? What message do you want your personal brand to send?' It's important to find what's true to you."

When it comes to work wear, learning to select the right clothing isn't about dressing just like everybody else in the office. It's about appropriate dressing that exudes confidence.

"We play with the colour palette and the fit. If you wear clothes that flatter your body type, you will look and feel great, sending a look of confidence wherever you go."

A professional image also varies from industry to industry, she notes. But the most important factor to contemplate when assessing your professional image, is that it must be appropriate. Your choice of clothing needs to reflect the industry you work within, your company's corporate culture and your client's expectations.

Feldman also helps individual and corporate clients navigate some of the tricky questions that arise in a modern workplace surrounding social etiquette. For example, some clients wonder who shakes hands first or initiates introductions in mixed-gender situations. The answer? Gender shouldn't enter into it. Male or female, make eye contact, shake hands and initiate the introduction — a positive first impression depends on it. How you interact socially in a business setting speaks volumes about your personal character and directly impacts your credibility as a professional. Feldman stresses that we need to be mindful of the impact our actions have on others and of the image we are projecting.

Depending on the focus of a class or consultation, she might also discuss the importance of body language, and teach clients how to hone networking skills or enjoy a business lunch with confidence, focusing on the business at hand and not which water glass to use!

Feldman is one of only two internationally trained impression management professionals in North America to have the new, International Civility Trainers' Consortium endorsed certification.

Whether you're looking to land your first job or promotion to a corner office, to expand your professional network, or to enhance the customer experience, the principle is the same.

"Always be aware. Don't underestimate the power of your image." ■

**Learn more at
highstyleimage.com.**

Photo by Darcy Finley

