

Body language and image

Introduction

This article is part of our [sales guide for contractors](#).

Whether we like it or not, you will be judged by the image you project. Body language and image go hand in hand and it will be useful to look at them both together.

In this article we will discuss effective use of body language to project yourself as best as you can.

Image

Image should never be underestimated, and your **presentation** and **presenting** forms part of how it is projected.

Your image has a massive impact on how you are viewed. This applies in the work place, at home, socially, in fact in all aspects of life. And the effects of your image can be just as positive as they can be negative. As we all know, you should not judge a book by its cover. However, be aware that in the real world and in particular in the business world – you will be judged by your image.

Imagine you are about to meet someone for a date in a good restaurant and you arrive in torn jeans and a scruffy shirt. What does this tell your date? Perhaps that you are not really interested in the date, you are lazy, you are poor or that you are unfashionable? As unfair as all of these connotations may be, we all know that the effect of not dressing the part is normally negative. This is exactly the same in business.

So, we need to look at image as an opportunity! To wear the right clothes is not difficult, not necessarily expensive and does not need to feel uncomfortable. In fact, it is very easy and will position you in a far better light than someone who is poorly dressed for an occasion. Good sales people use their image to their advantage and before they have even spoken a word, the customer will view them as credible and worth listening to.

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It is vital that your image achieves the right balance. You must dress in the appropriate way for the business you are in. This means not being under dressed, but equally not being overdressed. Overdressed can mean being too fashionable or dripping in diamonds and gold. Under dressed can mean not wearing a jacket or suit. Typically, to dress in a classically styled suit, polished shoes, white or light coloured shirt is the right balance. You will probably already know what you should be wearing, you just may not actually be doing it!

Body Language

Body language is a fascinating subject that can be studied at length, but for now – let's make sure we cover the essentials.

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So you are wearing the right clothes and you look the part, but there is a further issue to look at – the way you hold yourself.

If you slouch, your eyes are looking down and you shuffle across the room, people's first impressions of you will remain negative. You may be perceived as shy, lacking in confidence and unsure of yourself. Well, here is a very simple solution to this problem – stand up straight, walk with confidence, look people in the eye and provide your colleagues with a firm, but not bone breaking, handshake.

As with your image, you should strive for the right balance. Appearing too confident will make people think you are arrogant, not appearing at all confident will create the wrong impression.

Look at people you believe demonstrate the right levels of confidence. How do they dress, how do they walk, do they look you in the eye when they talk with you? Watch yourself in the mirror and try to form an objective opinion as to how you will be perceived. Do this from two aspects – the way you dress, and the way you hold yourself.

Posture is easy to correct and pays big dividends. It is well known that if you stand up straight, shoulders back and have a smile on your face – it is difficult to hold negative thoughts in your mind for long. Try this now and see how much better you feel when your posture is strong and correct. This is how you should look and feel when conducting business. Be aware that this positive difference will have a positive effect on much of your life and see how your friends and colleagues will comment on this change in you – and the good news is it is easy to do.

Mirroring

Lets look a little closer at body language in the area of sales. A technique widely used in sales is called mirroring. Mirroring is when you reflect the body

language shown by your customer in a sales environment. If your customer leans back and is relaxed, you do the same. Should your customer lean forward and look you straight in the eyes, you do the same. When you mirror someone in this way, it provides a feeling of unity between you and your customer. Unfortunately, if your body language is different to your customers, the opposite occurs.

Try this out with colleagues and business meetings, and also in social situations. You will be surprised at how attention to mirroring will make people feel more comfortable with you.

Summary

Image and body language can really work for or against you. Paying attention to these areas and adjusting how you look and hold yourself will ultimately change how you are perceived.

Take note of the image and body language of people you admire and respect. Start to dress and act more like they do and you are already well on your way to a massive improvement on your image.

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