

Job Coach: Looks matter in an interview

Debbie Matson

The old adage "clothes make the person" is true when it comes to a job interview. Although you don't want to lose your individual style, it is important that your look fits in with your potential employer's corporate culture and the image which it projects outside.

Within seconds, your potential new employer will have made up their mind whether you will be a good fit for the organisation or not. This may sound superficial, but every time you go to an interview you are judged on your visual and behavioural appearance. Granted, you need to have the necessary work experience and qualifications to clinch the job, but the way you look may just give you that competitive edge.

To play it safe, dress conservatively for the interview and wear a suit or smart clothing in keeping with the corporate culture. Under-dressing for your first encounter conveys a lax attitude towards the position and the company. If you are unsure what to wear, find out what other employees

get to your interview at least 15 minutes early. Research the best way to get to the office and how long it will take to make sure that you aren't late. Having that extra time before the interview will give you a chance to mentally relax and prepare yourself for the interview. In hot weather it will also allow you time to cool off.

Your attitude shows through in everything you do. Having a positive attitude is a great attribute. If you are positive, even in the face of criticism or in the case of nervousness, future employers will see this as a great characteristic. Maintain an upbeat manner and a winning smile. Remember you are marketing a product – yourself. Take a critical look at yourself and see if you can improve your appearance. Make sure that you are making the right impression as it is virtually impossible to change or reverse that first opinion.

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big part in making a first impression. A warm, confident smile sets you off to a positive start. Stand tall, make eye contact and greet your interviewer with a firm handshake. Be aware of your nervous habits, such as a nervous laugh, and keep them in check.

Calm down, relax and be yourself. Investigate relaxation techniques to calm your adrenaline and nervous energy. If you are feeling uncomfortable or ill at ease, the interviewer will sense this. Make sure you give the interviewer your undivided attention. Turn off your mobile phone and don't be distracted by what's happening outside of your meeting.

Punctuality is key. There is nothing more frustrating than having to wait for a candidate. After all, the company is giving you an opportunity, and they have other candidates to see. Their time is important and if you waste it, this will reflect badly on you. After all if you can't turn up to an interview on time, your future employer will question whether you will get to work or meet your clients on time. Aim to

Practical points

- Remember to sell and package yourself in the best possible way presentable
- First impressions are made within the first few seconds of meeting
- Besides visual appearance, how you behave during the interview makes an impact

at the company wear to work. Dressing well can also give you the added confidence you need – after all if you look the part, you're more likely to get the part.

It may sound basic, but make sure that you look neat and tidy, that your hair is brushed, you've had a shave, your shoes are polished and that you are wearing clean, ironed clothes. And don't forget personal hygiene. There is nothing more off-putting than sitting face to face with someone who doesn't smell fresh.

Presentation is not just about your appearance. Your behaviour plays a