

## **“Packaging” Yourself for Success** by Julie Godshall Brown

Everyone has heard of “dressing for success”; however, my belief is that how you are perceived in the workplace goes beyond your attire. Why do consumer product companies spend a fortune on research and design for the packaging of their products? The answer: the physical packaging conveys a message to the public regarding what is inside. The packaging determines how the consumer perceives the product—high or low quality, average or delicious, beneficial or invaluable. What does your “packaging” tell your coworkers and management about you?

Please understand that I am not speaking of physical beauty or expensive clothing. I recognize that most of us cannot afford to spend a typical monthly house payment on our wardrobe, and that God has blessed us all with different and unique physical attributes. You may feel strongly that education and experience are the only keys to get you where you want to be. An analysis of earnings and education data compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics does tell us that workers with a bachelor’s degree earn more than \$1.9 million over a 40 year period than those with a high school degree. Certainly communication skills, intelligence, determination, tenacity, integrity, and experience are critical components to your career success. It is also important, however, to recognize that your physical presentation is an important piece of the puzzle.

Regardless of your organization’s culture, a professional and conservative presentation is appropriate in the workplace. Your presentation includes your attire and accessories, hairstyle, mannerisms, odor (good or bad), makeup, posture, and cleanliness. Consider encounters that you have with businesses in the area. Do you not form an initial impression of the person and the company based on the staff member’s presentation? Often you may be the a customer’s only impression of your firm. Your physical presentation should tell others that you care about the way that you represent your firm and that you take the time to pay attention to the details.

Many books have been written regarding how to prepare for the interview, how to dress for success, and how to land the “big job” of which you dream. Think back to that very important day in your life when you interviewed for your current job. I am certain that you took the time to put your best foot forward. My guess is that you did not roll out of bed and into the car without a thought regarding the impression that you would make. Ask yourself why that is any less important today and everyday. Your career may depend on your answer!

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