

Smooth operators



Voyeur Inflight Magazine - June 2006



IN BUSINESS, IMAGE IS EVERYTHING, SO YOU'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO WALK THE WALK AND TALK THE TALK IF YOU WANT TO MAKE IT BIG. LOUISA DEASEY BRAVES THE MAKEOVER.

In the new era of casual Fridays, international video conferences and Jessica Simpson ringtones, it's hard to know what could boost you up the corporate ladder, and what could be sabotaging your rise to success. But there is help out there.

Individuals and companies from around the globe are paying big bucks for image consultants to enhance personal grooming, body language techniques and understandings of cultural etiquette, to help reach success in their professional and personal life.

Image consultants claim that non-verbal communication tools such as clothing and body language can influence the success of a business, because the way potential clients perceive employees influences the way a product or service is ultimately judged. So, the CEO who leaves his Target tag sticking out, or the receptionist with bleached hair and dark roots, can negatively impact on a company's image.

And in the world of super-speedy global business, being familiar with cultural protocols, such as how to shake a foreigner's hand, can be the ingredient that makes or breaks a deal.

The booming image consulting industry hasn't been officially audited since the early 1990s, but if you flick through the Yellow Pages, you'll find about 20 different companies professing to offer image renovations.

The prices for image overhauls vary as widely as the experience and services of the companies who offer them.

For further information on this article and the coaching programs available please contact:



Image Group International
Asia Pacific Head Office
Tel: (+61 3) 9820 4449
Email: info@imagegroup.com.au
Website: www.imagegroup.com.au
©2006

At the top end of the market is the multi-million-dollar firm, Image Group International. They extend on Trinny and Susannah's advice in *What Not to Wear*, by teaching media strategies and life planning skills, as well as wardrobe selection techniques. Image Group International's CEO, Jon Michail, claims he has worked with well-known political clients (though he isn't allowed to name them), as well as with Oprah Winfrey and John Travolta's teams.

Recently, many CEOs have cottoned on to the fact that if they want their brands to be as well-known as the Oprahs of this world, they need to start investing in the image of their employees. And they can see that this is an investment bound to offer returns.

Michail says: "It costs between \$50,000 and \$100,000 a year to employ a personal public relations representative – why not teach people to do it themselves?"

Michail and his team arrange corporate "branding" packages in the Asia-Pacific region and the US, for high-flying clients such as Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, Mercedes-Benz and ANZ. They teach staff everything from how to conduct a business lunch in another country, to how people can use accessories such as pens and briefcases to communicate a message.

Image consultants teach strategies that actors and moviemakers have known for eons: if you look the part, people will believe you fit the part. Every little detail – from the objects in your office, to the way you walk – affects your ability to pull off a certain role.

"You see people walking taller as they look better, changing their body language, treating themselves with more value and respect."

Michail agrees, stating that businesses that undertake image consulting also benefit from higher staff retention rates: "When staff feel good about themselves they stick around longer."

And it's clear that image consulting benefits businesses in other ways, as the newly polished employee becomes a walking, talking 'branding strategy' for the company. Employees start dressing well, speaking success, looking people in the eye with confidence, and knowing how to order entrees for a team of Japanese businessmen.

So, image consulting can enhance the way a company is represented publicly, but what can it offer the individual, or the ambitious small-business owner?

Image Group International's John Michail believes that the average person doesn't understand the impact that personal image can have on every aspect of their life.

"We need to embrace the fact that personal presentation will open doors for us if it's done effectively."



For further information on this article and the coaching programs available please contact:

Image Group International

Asia Pacific Head Office

Tel: (+61 3) 9820 4449

Email: info@imagegroup.com.au

Website: www.imagegroup.com.au

©2006

Michail tells the success story of a young nursing student who went from just scraping by, to a salary of more than \$100,000, just by changing her body language.

"From working on something as simple as opening her mouth when she smiled, she began to land jobs and promotions... I always say I don't create the rules, I just teach people what they are."

"We were all looking at each other with new eyes... and if we're noticing it, imagine what the clients are thinking."

Despite the simplicity of the makeover, in sales, looking good can seal the deal.

"In our industry, 90 per cent of the time the vendor will choose their agent based on feeling comfortable with them, and when you've got an agent knocking on your door and they don't look right, it could be the end of your business."

So, while it's true that what's on the inside is what counts, great packaging makes people sit up and take note.

EXTREME MAKEOVERS

Hillary Clinton

As a feminist hippie from way back, Hillary wouldn't cut her hair or wear a suit until a team of consultants convinced her it would be a vital step for her husband to win the presidential election.

Crown Princess Mary

When this Aussie Cinderella left her job as a real-estate agent in Tassie, for a party life in Sydney, she employed an image consultant. After losing 10 kilos, her lycra miniskirts, and her Tassie twang, she gained a Prince. Our Mary also won the hearts of the Danes by becoming fluent in their tongue, on a consultant's suggestion.

Winona Ryder

The suits and schoolgirl-headband Winona wore to her trials for shoplifting not only helped her avoid being sentenced to prison – she even managed to snap up a million-dollar Marc Jacobs modelling contract, which poked fun at the charges.

Kylie Minogue

Who can explain Kylie's 360-degree turnaround from permed *Neighbours* starlet to international A-list celebrity and gay icon? From clever pairings with ex-boyfriend Michael Hutchence and creative partner Nick Cave, to her famous gold hotpants, Kylie is an image consultant's greatest achievement.



For further information on this article and the coaching programs available please contact:

Image Group International

Asia Pacific Head Office

Tel: (+61 3) 9820 4449

Email: info@imagegroup.com.au

Website: www.imagegroup.com.au

©2006

John Howard

Have you ever noticed our PM looking a bit flustered? We haven't either. When public speaking, he rarely puts a foot wrong, and it's been reported that he organises vertically challenged speakers to 'warm up' the audience, so that he appears tall.

Steve Vizard

Vizard's transformation from lawyer to media personality and TV host has been credited to an image consultant, not to mention his smooth escape from what could ruin anybody: accusations of fraud.



For further information on this article and the coaching programs available please contact:

Image Group International
Asia Pacific Head Office
Tel: (+61 3) 9820 4449
Email: info@imagegroup.com.au
Website: www.imagegroup.com.au
©2006