



... Where *Style* Meets Purpose

A Look of Confidence: The Successful Interview Image

When you feel good about yourself, you radiate confidence. The same, unfortunately, can be true when you're feeling desperate or negative. Times of uncertainty tend to challenge one's best intentions to convey enthusiasm and optimism. Avoid the nonverbal messages of discomfort and nervousness. Instead, project the statement, "I'm capable, powerful, and the right person for the job."



The message you communicate during an interview can be the difference between that next great job and unemployment. The current economy has led to an excess of skilled job seekers so your competition is as eager and able as you are. A key element of your professional image, your non-verbal message, can be the tool to reinforce your resume and make you stand out above the crowd.

Keep in mind that first impressions happen quickly. In only one tenth of a second, the human brain receives input and draws a conclusion from a visual picture. In that small window of time, an opinion is formed about you based on your appearance; your dress, body language, mannerisms and demeanor, so make it count! In those first moments, make a statement that you can spend the rest of your interview building on. Let that initial

impression work for you. Consider the following tips as you venture out to secure the next step in your career.

Attire

1. Evaluate the work environment. Is it business casual, artsy, conservative? Dress appropriately for the culture, while maintaining professionalism.
2. Have your suit dry cleaned if needed. Make sure you look wrinkle free, coordinated and polished at every turn.
3. Keep your make-up, jewelry and other accessories light and avoid fragrance so you don't offend the eyes and nose.
4. Have your shoes polished and in good condition. (The eyes are the windows to the soul, but the shoes are the gauge to the work character!).
5. Make sure your hair is neat, appropriate for the atmosphere, and maintenance free. Tidy hair prevents the potential distraction of fidgety gestures to brush it away from eyes.
6. Avoid facial hair and visible tattoos. A clean-shaven face projects a more trustworthy and credible image. If appropriate to the work environment, grow the hair *after* the job is secured. Same for tattoos -- you are more hire-worthy when speaking the same nonverbal language as your listener. Take care not to alienate with controversial personal expression in the form of tattoos.

Nonverbal cues are as important as your interview dress. You have this opportunity to project confidence, poise, and competence.

Body Language

1. Posture speaks volumes. An erect, open posture exudes confidence. Keep your body's center facing your listener, and avoid crossing arms or clasping hands so you maintain a "receptive" demeanor.
2. Eye contact is important. In American society, 40-60% direct eye contact is considered the appropriate standard. Less may suggest a shifty character; more, and the receiver feels imposed upon. Use an effective gaze to send a message of sincere and genuine interest.

3. Awareness. Be aware of nervousness, tics, and bad habits. Stay in the moment and project what you want your interviewer to see: the best possible you!

A significant contributor to projecting a powerful presence is having a positive mental attitude. Most interviewers are intuitive enough to pick up on your feelings during an interview. If you are uncomfortable and awkward during the meeting, your interviewer may be as well. (If they are uncomfortable, they're less likely to make a positive decision about you.) If you are in a positive state of mind, confident, strong and calm, it will be apparent. Your interview will progress more smoothly, and the flow of the interpersonal exchange will be attributed to you and your abilities, setting you apart from your competition.

Once you make an impression, it's difficult to change it. Make sure that what you're projecting is the impression you want to leave the interviewer with. Be mindful and in the moment. With proper preparation, you can tell your story - the story of you as the confident, poised professional who should get the job!