

Positive Image



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Introduction

Overview

In a professional work environment, we need to be aware of the image we present to our co-workers as well as our customers.

A positive image includes physical elements such as appearance, dress, cleanliness and mental elements such as attitude. Cues to mental attitudes include posture, speech, manners, facial expressions and gestures.

The way we look, speak and act, sends messages to others which can be interpreted either positively or negatively.

A positive image is important because:

- It encourages others to respond positively to us.
- It can help open doors of opportunity.
- It makes us feel good about ourselves and boosts our level of confidence.

The purpose of this unit is to create an awareness of the importance of image and how it affects your life and offer steps to achieve the goal of “Being the Best You Can Be.”

Objectives

The information, activities and practice provided in this unit will enable you to:

1. Define image.
2. Identify the elements of a positive image.
3. Identify image builders and describe how they contribute to a positive image.
4. Identify image busters and describe what should be done to eliminate them.
5. Explain why a positive image is important and how it can help achieve personal and career goals.
6. Identify ways to present a positive image in the workplace.
7. Assess your personal image and identify specific steps towards enhancing your image.



Image Overview

The First Seven Seconds

Research shows we start to make up our minds about other people within seven seconds of first meeting them. Much of this is unspoken, but we are communicating with our eyes, faces, bodies, and attitudes.

Whether we realize it or not, we're signaling to other people our true feelings and attitudes.

Stop and think about some of the most memorable meetings you've had with other people. It may have been an introduction to a friend or a future spouse. It may have been a job interview. Whatever it was, try to remember the first seven seconds.

What happened during the first seven seconds of your meeting?

What did you think and feel about the other person?

Were you ever proven wrong about your first impression after you got to know that person?

Think about yourself.

What sort of impression do you believe you make on others in the first seven seconds?

How aware are you of all the signals you send to others as you come face-to-face, or even when you speak to others over the telephone?

How much control do you feel you have in making a positive first impression?

It's important to focus on these questions because they help define who you are and how others perceive you.

Fair or not, people often judge us by our appearance. That's why it's important to be aware of your image and what it says about you. Also, you need to make sure that your image is a door opener rather than a door closer.

Why a Positive Image?

Is there a difference between the way we see ourselves and the way others see us?

We know our motivations, our skills and our personalities. But, those who don't know us or have these insights see only the "package" we present and the message it sends.

What does image mean?

Do you think it's important to have a positive image?

A positive image is important because:

- It encourages others to respond positively to us.
- It can help open doors of opportunity.
- It makes us feel good about ourselves and boosts our level of confidence.



Elements of a Positive Image

Introduction

What things about a person help to form a positive image?

There are three elements of a positive image:

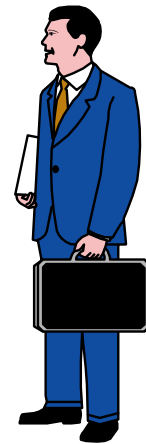
- Attitude
- Communication Style
- Personal Appearance



Attitude



Communication Style



Personal Appearance

Elements of a Positive Image

Attitude

We send out messages or “clues” which let others know how we feel about them and ourselves. For example, standing or sitting up straight tells others you are alert and confident.

Manners, gestures, and common courtesy also can be image builders. Saying “please” and “thank you,” extending your hand and giving a firm hand shake all send positive messages to those we meet and usually cause people to respond positively to us.

Direct eye contact is interpreted as a gesture of confidence and self-assurance. Make eye contact at least 80% of the time. It is one of the most powerful nonverbal tools in business.

If you want others to know that you are confident and friendly, make the first move to introduce yourself to people.

If you see someone coming to talk to you, greet him as he approaches. Always say your name if you haven’t seen him for a long time, or you are not sure if the person remembers who you are. People forget names all the time. Don’t assume people know who you are. They may know your face, but can’t remember your name. It can be embarrassing when someone doesn’t remember your name, so help them out.

Everyone has good days and bad days. It’s how you handle the bad days that demonstrates what kind of attitude you really have. Qualities of a positive attitude are as important to you as gas and oil are to your car. If a tune-up is needed, take care of it right away.



Activity: Check Your Attitude

Answer the following questions scoring from 1 to 5. For example, score yourself a “1” if you’re not good at this item or up to a “5” if you’re outstanding at this item.

1. How good are you at confronting other people when there is a problem, without attacking in a negative manner? _____
2. Do you accept responsibility when something goes wrong, without passing the buck or blaming others? _____
3. Are you an active self-starter every day, not passively sitting back and waiting for direction from others. _____
4. How good are you at resisting the temptation to gossip, spread rumors, or create problems among your co-workers? _____
5. How well do you communicate with your fellow employees, both in giving and in receiving information? _____
6. Are you a team player, helping others, pitching in, and supporting your fellow employees? _____
7. Are you a person who is generally enthusiastic and cheering others up, rather than dragging them down? _____
8. Do you accept criticism gracefully—neither over reacting or under reacting, but using the information to improve? _____
- Total Score _____

Attitude Rating:

- 36 - 40 = Excellent Attitude
- 25 - 35 = Good Attitude (with room for improvement)
- 18 - 24 = Poor Attitude (start improving)
- 17 - 0 = Bad Attitude (fix immediately)

Communication Style

How important is communication on the job?

The way we speak also sends an image message. Speaking in a clear voice that is easy to understand conveys confidence. Paying attention to grammar and pronunciation presents an intelligent image.

Listening

Listening intently to the other person also creates a positive image. Use body language and gestures to let the other person know that you are listening. Eye contact lets the other person know we are listening and paying attention. Looking a person in the eye signals trustworthiness.

Verbally let the person know that you understood what he or she is saying. Use phrases such as, “Yes, I agree, “I understand, or “I see.”

Paraphrase what the person has said to you and repeat it back. Two phrases that make this very easy are “If I understand you correctly...” and “What I hear you saying is...”



Activity: How Much Do You Listen?

“Do you talk more than you listen?” Check the line of the ratio best representing the percentage of time you generally talk and listen.

Talk	Listen
10 %.....	90 % ____
20 %.....	80 % ____
30 %.....	70 % ____
40 %.....	60 % ____
50 %.....	50 % ____
60 %.....	40 % ____
70 %.....	30 % ____
80 %.....	20 % ____
90 %.....	10 % ____

Personal Appearance

A clean, neat appearance gets a positive response from people. It's important to have clean hair and fingernails. When you reach to shake someone's hand, make sure your hands are clean and your fingernails manicured. Your hair should be cut neatly and styled to complement your facial features.

Whether you are wearing a suit or a uniform, it should fit, not be too loose or too tight. Also, it should be clean and pressed.

When shopping for business attire, you should select colors and styles that are most suitable for your body type.

Image Busters

Negative Attitude

What things about a person create a negative image?

A negative attitude is an image buster. Pessimistic people bring you down. The pessimist always sees the difficulty in every opportunity. If someone asks you how you are feeling and you actually tell them that things are terrible, people are not going to want to be around you.

If you've been around people who always tell you how the world's been treating them badly, or how their bosses treat them unfairly, you want to get away from them as quickly as possible.



Behavior clues that send a negative attitude message include:

- Frowning or scowling
- Rolling your eyes
- Slouching
- Not paying attention
- Poor speech habits
- Gum-chewing
- Poor manners

Poor Communication Style

Bad Listener

What makes a person a bad listener? Have you ever been talking with someone and while he or she was saying something, you were already thinking ahead to what your next witty remark will be? If you have, you weren't listening to that person. Without having all the necessary information, it becomes easy to jump to conclusions or make judgments.

Buzz Words

Many times communication breaks down when you carelessly speak using buzzwords and meaningless jargon.

What is jargon? Every profession has its terminology, acronyms, and jargon. When everyone understands the terms, it provides a quick and efficient shorthand. When someone doesn't understand the terms, it creates miscommunication and misunderstandings.

No one will be impressed if you throw around buzzwords or technical jargon especially if they don't understand what you are saying.

Sloppy Personal Appearance

Grooming

Dirty hair and fingernails are definite image busters. If your hair is dirty, or has obvious flakes of dandruff, or if you have dirt under your fingernails, this sends a message that you don't care about your appearance or your personal cleanliness.

If you wear cologne or perfume, it should not be overpowering. While you don't want to overpower anyone with perfume or cologne, you also want to ensure your body is clean and doesn't have a bad odor. A scent is a personal thing, and it should stay personal.

In fact, unless someone is very close to you, they shouldn't be able to tell you are wearing it. Many people are sensitive or allergic to perfumes and colognes. If you work in close quarters with a number of people it's probably a good idea not to wear perfume or cologne.

Clothing

Spots on your clothes or wrinkles make you look like you don't care about your appearance. You don't want your clothes to look like you slept in them and just rolled out of bed. Also, you don't want anyone to be able to tell what you have eaten by a spot on your clothing.

Accessories

Large, gaudy accessories and too much makeup are image busters. Well-chosen accessories and a moderate amount of makeup can enhance your appearance. However, you can have too much of a good thing.



Professional Appearance

Positive Image For the Job Search

Employers report the single most important factor to the success of an employment interview is the first impression you make with the interviewer.

Presenting a positive image during a job interview can make the difference between landing a job and losing a job.

Positive Image at Work

After you get a job, your image can impact the way people perceive you. It can be the difference between your boss seeing you as a capable professional employee or as someone who just shows up to collect a pay check. A positive image can make a difference in who is selected for promotions and other opportunities.

For the vast majority of positions, it's understood that a coat and tie, for men and or a suit, for women, is appropriate interview attire. Regardless of your field of work, show that you have taken the time to look nice and take the interview seriously. Remember first impressions count.

Certain dress is accepted in different organizations and in different parts of the country. The book, Professional Presence, lists three rules about professional appearance:

1. If you want the job, you have to look the part.
2. If you want a promotion, you have to look “promotable.”
3. If you want respect, you have to dress as well or better than the industry standard.

Your professional appearance matters. To some, this may be obvious, but you would be surprised how many people arrive for job interviews or greet customers dressed like a bicycle courier.

What is the Company Image?

Like people, companies also have an image that they project. In fact, companies pay millions of dollars to market their corporate image. For example:

Reebok: Hip; outrageous; energetic.

McDonald's: Inexpensive; fast; clean; family.

Apple: Innovative; smart; playful.

BMW: Performance; engineering; quality.

Find out how people dress around the manufacturing facility? Do they wear uniforms? Can you dress down most days and dress up if you meet with customers?

It is important to project a positive image in all situations, but nowhere is it as important as when you are looking for a job. After you get a job, a positive image is also very important to maintain.



Activity: Personal Inventory

Part I

List the personal assets that help you communicate your image message. Consider your physical appearance, energy, rate of speech, pitch tone, animation gestures, expressiveness of eyes, and ability to hold the interest of people who listen to you. Perhaps you can add other qualities. These assets make up “you.”

List five of your best personal image assets.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now, identify the areas of your personal image that you would like to improve. What areas of personal image do you feel less confident about.

List five key qualities that you want to project as a part of your personal image.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Part II

Now that you have determined the image you want to project, consider how you can build and project this image. For example, dress, language, voice, posture, body language, etc. Indicate below how you will project each of the five main qualities listed above.

Quality #1: _____

How you will project it: _____

Quality #2: _____

How you will project it: _____

Quality #3: _____

How you will project it: _____

Quality #4: _____

How you will project it: _____



Quality #5: _____

How you will project it: _____

Part III

After reviewing your answers from part II, enter the skills you want to learn in the space provided. Next, check the ways you will go about learning these skills.

List of Skills		Grammar				
Ways To Learn	Sample	Skill #1	Skill #2	Skill #3	Skill #4	Skill #5
Classes	X					
Seminars						
Home Study Courses	X					
Direct Observation						
Mentors						
Internships						
Volunteer Work						
Books	X					
Audio and/or Video Tapes						
Movies						
Magazines						
Newspaper Articles						
Role Models						
Others:						

Learning Resource Chart

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Summary

The Importance of a Positive Image

The purpose of this workshop is to understand the importance of your image and how it affects your life and to offer steps to achieve the goal of “Being the Best that You Can Be.”

We need to always be aware of the image we present because the way we look, speak and act, sends image messages to others.

A positive image has physical elements such as appearance, dress, cleanliness and mental elements such as attitude. Clues to mental attitudes include posture, speech, manners, facial expressions and gestures.

A positive image is important because:

- It encourages others to respond positively to us.
- It can help open doors of opportunity.
- It makes us feel good about ourselves and boosts our level of confidence.

Four Steps to Positive Image

There are four basic steps to building a positive image.

- Assess Your Current Image
- Determine the Kind of Image You Want to Project
- Identify Personal Image Builders and Image Busters
- Identify Steps to Achieve Image Goals

Assess Your Current Image

If you want to change your image or build on your assets you must examine your current image.

Determine the Kind of Image You Want to Project

Define what kind of image you want to convey to your co-workers, supervisor, and customers.

Identify Personal Image Builders and Image Busters

You have to identify the positive qualities you already possess — those things that contribute to your image goals. Identify your image busters — things that may be hindering you from reaching your personal and career goals.

Identify Steps to Achieve Image Goals

Determine what you must do in order to achieve a positive image.

You need to develop an action plan to achieve your image goals. This action plan should be a combination of specific steps toward achieving the desired result with target dates to accomplish each step in your plan. For example, an immediate step might be to get a new hair cut. In your action plan, set a date to achieve this step. An example of a long range plan might be to learn a new skill. In your action plan, you should include steps to find out where you can learn the skill, and set target dates to begin classes.



You Are the Message

What exactly does “You are the message” mean? It means when you communicate with someone, it’s not just the words you choose to send to the other person that make up your message. You’re also sending image messages about the kind of person you are—by your eyes, your facial expression, your appearance, your body movement, your vocal pitch, tone, volume, and many other factors.

Everything you do in relation to other people causes them to make judgments about you. The total you affects how others feel about you and respond to you.

If you are uncomfortable with who you are, it will make others uncomfortable, too. But, if you can identify and use your good qualities as a person, others will respond positively to you.

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