



Y-O-U ARE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT BUSINESS CARD!

A client once introduced me to a friend of hers; the friend oozed confidence, success, and charisma. I felt instantly that I wanted her as a contact, even though I had no idea what she did or for whom. She mentioned that she was in "construction." As we parted company, I asked for her business card and brochure. She didn't have a brochure, and she said she'd just started using business cards that year. WOW! This woman built a multi-million dollar project management firm, which ran for nearly five years with no printed marketing collateral. "What do you want to know? I can tell you," she smiled. Her personal image WAS her calling card.

Your personal image can, and should, be used to help build and grow your business. When strategically considered, it is at least as effective as other marketing tools, such as brochures, letterhead, and print advertisement. Time, effort, and money spent developing your personal image should be on par with resources allocated for other company marketing collateral.

My client's friend was the extreme, and she'd probably been more than a little lucky over the years. But she did understand that success, in any endeavor, is reported to have 60 percent to do with personal image. She did respect the studies, which revealed that within 10 seconds, a prospective client or contact has made decisions about your educational level, social status, and intellect, among other things.

But what exactly is personal image? Personal image or personal presence is a communication tool like speaking or writing. And like other communication skills we use, it's important to master, because only 7 percent of what our audience understands comes from the words we say. More than half of our message gets communicated through our body language and other "non-verbal" clues, such as wardrobe, grooming, height, or other physical appearances. Your image IS "saying" something,

whether or not you have considered it; and this something is either an asset or liability for your company.

Personal image is an effective marketing tool because it can powerfully reinforce your company's presence and (hopefully) bolster credibility. You are an extension of the company's brand. Countless prospective clients see every time you step outside the house; when you become an interactive poster for the company you lead.

If you want to use your personal presence to grow your business, consider the following:

- What are the attributes about yourself and/or the company that you want to communicate in an instant? Often, for leaders in a company, there is some overlap between personal attributes and the company branding. Focus on three to five visual attributes you want to "say" with your personal presence. Then write them down (i.e. "in charge," detailed-oriented, creative, successful, etc.).
- Remember there are visual, vocal and non-verbal elements; consider them all. Keep in mind that your audience sees your wardrobe and personal grooming; they hear your voice and how you speak; they experience your body language and eye contact.
- Your default program is probably based on old habits so expect minor discomfort as you work to create something new.

Once your goals are set, get proper coaching. You probably trust a graphic artist to develop your logo or depend on an accountant's expertise to identify tax shelters – invest in your business by retaining an image consultant or style coach. (Now affordable to non-superstars – thanks to mega trends and media frenzy.) Coaching is important because another set of eyes, in some cases, a team of eyes, is needed because we don't see ourselves as others experience us. Leader

Brand Strategists is a company that helps executives develop their "Leader Brand." These personal branding gurus are objective and coach business leaders across the country (www.beapowerplayer.com).

It is impossible to be objective about ourselves, and friends usually can't offer that first-impression perspective. However, when you ask advice, the right question to ask is not, "Do I look okay?" but "Do I look in charge, detailed oriented, creative, successful ..."

And for those who don't think of themselves as an extension of the company—think again. You may not feel this way, but chances are your clients and prospects do. So before you roll out of bed on a Saturday and go to the grocery store in frumpy sweats or drag into Starbucks with blood-shot eyes, consider meeting a prospect. They will see your business card, the only question is whether or not it will be the paper one!



Kali Evans-Raoul is founder and president of The Image Studios, a Chicago-based consulting firm that specializes in image communication. Kali holds a degree in chemical engineering from Carnegie Mellon University and carries 20 years of experience in the personal care service industry. The Image Studios team

provides communication training, wardrobe counseling, and personal grooming services to individuals and organizations. To learn more call 312-421-4660 or visit The Image Studios at www.theimagestudios.com.

PAC DONATIONS CREATE VISIBILITY FOR NAWBO



NAWBO
Political Action Committee

As the 2006 Congressional election season heats up, the NAWBO PAC is already hard at work reviewing races and designating candidates to support with campaign contributions and endorsements.

On March 15, Claire Guthrie Gastañaga, NAWBO's Vice President for Public Policy, represented the NAWBO PAC at a fundraiser in Washington, D.C., for Senate Small Business Committee Chair Olympia Snowe (R-ME). Snowe, who has been a good friend to women's business centers and to all small businesses, was

Also in March, the NAWBO PAC endorsed Congresswoman Heather Wilson (R-NM), providing both a letter of endorsement as well as a press release to her campaign. Wilson was endorsed by the PAC in the 2004 election cycle and has proved to be a tremendous advocate for women business owners, thus showing that endorsements are an excellent method for building positive relationships with legislators.

Further, PAC contributions to candidates provide visibility opportunities for local NAWBO chapters willing to get involved in the check and/or endorsement letter presentations. Earlier this year, the PAC voted to again support the candidacy of Congresswoman Melissa Bean (D-IL), a business owner and NAWBO member who has been supportive of our public policy issues. Last February, two Chicago Area NAWBO members, Chapter

delegation that had visited him 12 months earlier at Public Policy Days—and even recalled our issues—was a testament to NAWBO's ever-growing impact.

To make a donation to the PAC, go to www.nawbo.org/pac where you may pay using your personal credit card. Personal checks, with your business card, can be mailed to NAWBO PAC, PO Box 826173, Philadelphia, PA 19182-6173.

For more information about the NAWBO PAC, contact Sallie Mullins Thompson at smt@wt.net.

By Sallie Mullins Thompson