

WORKING MATTERS

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Packaging Yourself Is First Key to That Job, Promotion

The holidays are coming and, like it or not, we will be faced with activities of the season: planning, partying, cooking, shopping and, yes, the tedious task of wrapping gift after gift after gift. We all do it because we recognize the importance of appearance. After all, it wouldn't be very nice to present a gift stuffed in a brown paper bag. (Can you imagine the response? "What is that, lunch?") You want your gift to stand out under that tree or wherever one places presents amongst many – especially when your gift is to someone truly special.

So it is with dressing for a job interview. You've topped the exam. You've done your homework. You are good at what you do. So, just like the present, you must wrap yourself in appropriate attire that says, "I shine and I'm the one you need to hire."

Here are a few suggestions to help you wrap yourself up for an interview:

- **Make sure people cannot smell you before they see you.** This is a rule that is often overlooked. If you must, then a slight dab of aftershave or cologne ought to do the trick. More often than not, though, a good shower and shampoo should suffice. Remember that the person interviewing you may be allergic to fragrances and (since I happen to be one of those people) I can assure you that you will not make a good impression. (I was stuck in a doctor's waiting room today when I smelled it before I saw it – overpowering and offensive. I thought I was going to faint. A lady, I mean woman, walked in smelling like she had doused herself with perfume. I got an instant headache and had to cover my nose the whole time. Okay, that may have been rude – but so is just pouring that stuff on and then subjecting the rest of us to it!)
- **Ladies – don't clown around.** Folks want to see your face, not what you've put on it. Leave the colors and the glitter in the make-up drawer. Opt instead for a natural look – light mascara, light blush, light to natural lipstick.
- **Get a good manicure.** Keep your nails clean and clear and at a reasonable length. (Ladies, even if red is your favorite color, don't wear it. Colored nail polish just does not work for an interview.)
- **Hair tops it off.** It is your crowning glory, so don't walk into an interview with a crooked or dull-looking crown! Simple, clean and away-from-your-face would be the general rule to follow. Leave the hair dye and spiking gel in the cabinet. Keep the bangs out of your eyes. A wild or scruffy or even sexy hair-in-your-face-look will not get you the job. A cutesy pigtail won't do it, either.
- **Gentlemen, watch the facial hair.** If you have an afternoon interview, make sure the five-o'clock shadow doesn't darken your

interview. If you wear a mustache or a beard, then keep it neatly trimmed.

- **Go with the demure look, ladies.** You are not going to a nightclub, so showing skin and/or wearing a revealing blouse or tight, short skirt is just "not okay." (Ask yourself: Will a female interview panel be impressed?)
- **Gentlemen, do go for the white or neutral-colored shirt.** Leave the shiny gold or silver shirt in the closet. Hide that large gold chain under your shirt. You are not going to a nightclub. (Ask yourself: Will a male interview panel be impressed?)

■ **Invest in a good suit and make sure it is tailored to fit.** Stay away from trends. Stay away from tight (you'll be more comfortable). No baggy pants and jackets. No wild prints. Instead, keep the suit conservative. Keep it neutral. Dark colors work best: navy, gray or black.

■ **Stay away from putting on anything distracting.** It will take away from what you are saying and who you are. Neckties that are alive and jump out at your interview panel tend to do this. So will large or dangling or noisy jewelry. Ladies, pearls or small diamond earrings will work just fine. Gentlemen, lose the earring(s).

■ **Shoes. Shoes.**

Shoes. Make sure they shine and match your outfit. Ladies, no sling-backs, platform or open shoes and to both genders: definitely no sneakers!

■ **The red flag:** If you're not sure about whether or not to wear something (whether it be a shirt, tie, suit or jewelry) then consider it a red flag and don't wear it. Opt instead for something you don't need to worry about.

■ **Give yourself time.** Arrive a few minutes early for your interview. Get a drink of water. Check yourself out in the mirror – from head to foot. Make sure you like what you see. If you do, then so will others. Your confidence will see to that.

Packaging your physical self may seem trivial, but when you stop to think about it, first impressions do count. How you look (and smell) when you walk into a room to face a panel of professionals ready and waiting to interview you can spell the difference between success and failure. If you want that job, or that promotion, then dress the part and, I can't say it enough: Keep it simple. Keep it comfortable. Keep it conservative. Keep it understated. Learn this and you've got the first key to a series of doors that can land you that job or much awaited promotion!

Jackie is happy to answer personnel questions from *Alive!* readers, or direct you to the correct source for answers. E-mail her: talkback@cityemployeesclub.com



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