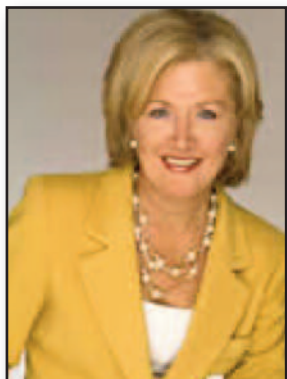


THERE IS NOTHING CASUAL ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

By Sara Canuso



I guess by now you are tired of hearing the “Business Casual” chatter. For me it began not so much about business casual but rather my realizing there was nothing casual about my future. So I ask that you listen for at least this one last time about the true meaning of casual.

It was at long last the day I had waited for: to meet with a prospect that I had worked so hard to meet. Nine months of calls, research, and prepara-

tion and now it was time for the two of us to meet and for me to seal the deal. I was confident that my presentation and knowledge of my services would be an automatic yes to my asking for the contract. With the weather being 98 and humid, the thought of putting on a suit was somewhere in the back of my mind but never quite made it to the front, so off I went in my business casual attire. Arriving ten minutes ahead of schedule I began to chat with the receptionist who graciously asked if I was heading to the Phillies game after leaving my meeting. WOW! So that was her first impression of me, a Phillie Phanatic.

Upon entering the meeting, it was so down hill I even lost my balance and tripped over his brief case. In the event you are wondering NO, I did not get the contract. At that point I could not remember my name. If only I had dressed the part - and I will share with you the whys.

Besides being an external cue affecting the response of others toward you, clothing is also an inner cue affecting your self image. Feeling good about yourself increases your personal presence. The opposite is true when you don't feel right about the way you look - it causes a drain to your self image.

Clothing accounts for over 80% of one's first impression of you since that is the percentage of the body that is typically covered with clothing.

Your perceived level of confidence, power, competence, intelligence, ability and self esteem is decided by others before you say a word. So, in short, visual presentation has its benefits as well as consequences. I can promise you that when you wear more powerful looking clothing, professional business attire, dark suits, impressive ties, etc., it changes your mindset. Your posture will be better, your look of confidence will increase, your tone of voice will change, you will have a stronger handshake, and above all a look of success.

Here is a list that will act as a guide to leading you to walking into a room with an empowering first impression.

1. Brand your Image – Once and for all find out what image you should be projecting. Being in the legal profession you should have a likable, confident, intelligent look. Suits should

be the major pieces in your wardrobe. Don't look as though you are rushing off to the golf course or the Sixers game.

2. Dress Consistently – People will start to recognize your look. Amazing how people will start to notice and compliment you on your polished professional look. It has been proven that it is easier for people to say no to someone who is dressed casually.

3. Know your Body Type- One size does not fit all. Clothes that are too small or too large can make you look disheveled. Also find a style that works with your body. Find a good tailor and for a minimal fee you can have a suit altered to look custom made. (email me at sara@asuitableolution.com if you need the name of a great inexpensive tailor)

4. Dress with Attention to Color – Research has shown that color is a very powerful communicator that has emotional and physiological affects on both the wearer and the observer. Wearing the correct color can make you look younger, thinner, richer, energized and more powerful. And of course wearing the wrong color can completely drain both you and your business dealing. I am sure you have things in your closet that you never wear and that is due to the fact you just never feel good in them. Knowing your colors will also save you money when buying clothing.

5. Dress in the Best You Can Afford- Start to build a wardrobe with quality suits. The benefits of buying a good suit are that they will last longer, look and fit better and will feel more comfortable and will be cheaper in the long run. You can have one suit and change the look just by changing the color of the shirt or blouse and the tie or accessories.

6. Pay Attention to Details- Be sure to maintain impeccable grooming habits. Hair, nails, body and food odors. Your shoes - be sure to have them shined and heels in great shape. People always tend to look at your watch so be sure to wear a nice watch. I happen to always wear a blouse with French Cuffs. There is nothing that gives you that finished look like wearing a pair of cufflinks.

7. Dress the Part – What role are you dressing for and where are you heading? Looking the part can enhance your confidence and image and you will find doors opening for opportunities you never thought possible.

8. Seek Help – If you are concerned, confused or need help in branding your image you can contact me at sara@asuitableolution.com to schedule a FREE 30 minute consultation.

Remember above all that there are no dress rehearsals for First Impressions!