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Jill Haney

Cincinnati.com » The Enquirer » Jill Haney » Attire, grooming are highly important for a job interview
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Attire, grooming are highly important for a job interview

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You've just received the phone call you've been waiting for. A company you are interested in working for has asked you to come in and interview. Are you prepared? Have you done your due diligence on the company? Have you planned what you would wear for such an important interview?

If not, take a deep breath and then get to work on presenting the best you possible.

Remember that one of the goals of the interview is to create interest in yourself so that the employer wants to invite you back for a second interview. Employers expect interviewees to look the part. Unless you have been told to dress casually, you should dress in professional business attire, even if the company dress code is business casual.

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Terry Horan, president of Horan Associates & Horan Securities, says when he is interviewing potential employees, he is looking to see whether they "are dressed for the next position."

Horan also checks to see whether the candidate is paying attention to details such as polished shoes, a nice portfolio and a handwritten thank-you note. This attention to detail sends the message that the candidate understands the importance of image and perception. It also speaks volumes about the competence and confidence of the potential employee.

I would also recommend that interviewees err on the side of conservative dress. Men should dress in business suits in the traditional business colors of navy or charcoal. Women also should wear traditional business dress, and I would even go farther and recommend that women wear a skirted suit. Personally, I feel more powerful in a pantsuit, but there are some in the business community who may feel a pantsuit is inappropriate. Go figure. Hose for women. I hate them too, but they are necessary, especially in a conservative industry such as banking or insurance. Ties for men.

Studies show that companies are willing to pay higher starting salaries to applicants who are well dressed. Looking good can mean more money in the bank.

Some general guidelines to follow to make a powerful first impression are:

Make sure nails are properly groomed, clean and well-manicured. Ladies' nails don't have to be polished, but they should be the same length.

Go easy on the perfume and the aftershave. You never know whether the interviewer might have allergies.

Hair is our most powerful accessory. Make sure it is off the face.

Men, do not wear short-sleeved shirts. Men lose a lot of credibility when wearing short-sleeved shirts to work, even in a business casual environment.

Ladies, too much skin means too much information. An interview is not the place for cleavage. Neither is the workplace, for that matter.

Carry only one bag, preferably a briefcase. Backpacks are not professional in any way in the office.

No cell phones. Leave them in your car. If you answer your phone in an interview, you will not get

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a phone call back for a second interview.

Wear the clothes that make you feel powerful and invincible, not the suit that has been sitting in your closet for 10 years. Dated clothes send the message of dated ideas.

We all have the power to have an effective image. A little bit of planning goes a long way in helping to get your foot in the door. Good luck.

Jill Haney's Cincinnati-based business, JH Image Consulting, conducts individual and corporate group training on appearance, behavior, and communication. She is a certified image consultant with the Association of Image Consultants International. Reach her at 513-505-2732, jill@jhimage.net, or www.jhimage.net.

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