Impression Strategies

That Catapult Your Career and Income

Lesson 2:

"Impression Strategies"

The Mona Lisa Effect provides an extremely rich metaphor for the concepts I want to introduce in this Lesson. Mona Lisa is referred to as a Masterpiece. Not because she is considered a raving beauty or wears beautiful colors or clothing styles. No, the famed Mona Lisa is a Masterpiece **because a Master painted her**.

Leonardo DaVinci was a master of color and composition. He knew how to lead the eye exactly where he wanted it, and he knew how to set a mood with color. He also painted Mona Lisa's face seven layers deep to create the luminosity that only a young child has. Mona Lisa also wears eyeshadow, even though it had not been invented. DaVinci painted "shadows" in the creases of the eyes to give them shape and depth – and to make them mesmerizing.

It is not Mona Lisa's smile that draws you in and intrigues you. It is her eyes – and her "interactive" pose that makes her seem to be turning toward you. DaVinci was the first painter to depict a subject in such an engaging pose. All paintings from that era feature subjects in profile or looking squarely at the artist. They are static. Mona Lisa is not. She engages you.

Creating a Masterpiece

Look at the photograph below. At first glance, it appears to be a spontaneous photo of Chanel models taken after a fashion show. To the amateur photographer, it's all wrong. Only one model is looking at the camera: Kate Moss. And the models are not lined up by height at all, as we are prone to do for photos. The models are also wearing rather odd bathing suits, and all wear wool hats, except one, who stands apart from the group. Others form groups within the group.

The photograph of the fashion models is a takeoff on another famous painting by DaVinci. It is very likely that you have seen it – or a copy of it. Do you recognize the painting? Even in a group as small as ten, at least one person will recognize it. DaVinci's painting features men, not women; and there are twelve of them. Only one looks directly at the artist.

It is *The Last Supper*. Masters know that you can have only one focal point in a painting, and Kate Moss is the obvious focal point in the photograph above, because she is the only one looking directly at the camera. Just like the DaVinci original.

The same principle is true when it comes to people. There can be only one focal point: the face. Something is wrong if the eyes are riveted to the feet, dangly earrings or a cartoon motif on a tie.

In reality, all too many people walk around with no focal point, or multiple focal points. It is one of the reasons we attend a meeting or conference and can only vaguely remember any of the people we meet. Sometimes, however, we meet a person and the image of that person stays in our minds.

What exactly makes a person memorable? What does it take to make a profound first impression? As you may have guessed, it isn't just one thing. It is "everything."

FIRST IMPRESSIONS:
When the Sum Total is Greater than its Parts

First impressions are powerful. Harvard University has concluded that it takes a mere two seconds to make an in-depth and long-lasting impression about a person. Two groups of students responded to questionnaires about professors. One group had actually taken the professors' classes, while the other group saw two-second video clips of individual professors. The correlation was amazing. The two groups had similar impressions.

"Don't judge me by my looks, judge me by my competence," we all insist. Unfortunately, we DO judge a book by its cover, and even more so today in this fast-paced world where time is of a premium.

And Just What is That Judgment Process? . . .

Apparently the brain creates a composite of all the components of a person's image or persona and turns the components into a holistic overall first impression that is greater than the sum of all the components. It's pretty much like the *Mona Lisa Effect* where we cannot recall any details and are left only with an overall evocative impression that is captivating and memorable.

Obviously, to make a lasting impression, all that is necessary is to look really good or really bad! Most people fall somewhere in the middle and leave no lasting impression, so they are dismissed from our memories.

In the world of image, if you do everything right, no one notices details. Conversely, if just one element of the overall image is dated or out of sync, that's the only thing that is remembered. And it's not just spinach in the teeth or a run in the stockings. Dated hair for women and unprofessional ties for men are the biggest offenders.

So what else can go wrong? Everything about your appearance from head to toe, as you learned in Lesson One. The shape or "line" of a person's lips or eyebrows can suggest that he or she is friendly, cynical, threatening, or even bland. There must be overall harmony with your appearance.

Let me tell you about something that happened a few years. I asked my husband to help me clean the house on a Saturday morning because we were having dinner guests that night. After we had cleaned all day, my husband commented sarcastically, "We've worked all day long and no one will ever notice. It's very frustrating!"

"True. But if we hadn't cleaned," I replied, "they *would* notice. But it wouldn't be our music, flowers, candles, or lovely table. The only thing they would notice is the thin layer of dust on our crystal coffee table!"

“Dust” is an analogy for any kind of distraction that keeps you from noticing the positive things. We all want to be remembered, but not for the wrong thing. A dust-covered coffee table is not the thing I want to be remembered for when I give a dinner party.

“Image dust” is anything about your appearance from head to toe that creates a distraction and prevents your verbal message from being heard. A man in “slick” looking garments may talk all day about his wonderful products or services, but his verbal message will be overridden by his slick appearance.

This Is What You Absolutely Must Know . . .

If you want to have an image that is captivating and memorable, there are things you absolutely must know about. They are:

1. How to find the colors that make you look and *feel* better about yourself.
2. How to choose clothing styles that flatter your body type so you appear more attractive.
3. How to choose colors that will appeal to others psychologically.
4. How to choose colors and styles that make you appear more powerful.
5. Women: how to choose makeup colors that look natural and professional.

The "Magic"

The lessons ahead will show you the "magic" that will enable you to

- command attention when you enter a room
- outclass the competition with sheer elegance and style
- look more worldly, experienced and attractive
- influence the perception that others have of you.

It doesn't matter what kind of business you are in or what your area of focus is. Social psychologists have shown that when you dress

purposefully and strategically for each and every individual and situation, you will be in a position to influence the perception that others have of you. And you will tap into the power of image psychology and impression management.

It's important to understand a critical factor in influencing the impression that others have of you. To discover that critical fact, come with me to **Lesson 3**. This lesson will be waiting for you as an e-mail tomorrow!