Impression Strategies

That Catapult Your Career and Income

Lesson 3:

"The Psychology of Image"

Harvard University has shown that a long-lasting and in-depth first impression of another person takes a mere two seconds. And according to social psychologist, Robert Cialdini, PhD, we have devised “shortcuts” to aid us in decision making all the time. Cialdini says that we are bombarded daily with decisions to make, but we don’t have the time to thoroughly investigate every situation. As a result, we use “shortcuts” to help us choose and decide. We classify things according to a few key features, and then we respond mindlessly when one or another of the trigger features is present. Some of the most common trigger features are:

Looking Good = Good
Not surprisingly, we buy things from people we like. However, social scientists have identified a number of factors that reliably cause “liking,” and they asset that good-looking people are liked. It turns out that there is an *unconscious* assumption that **looking good = good**, and this becomes a handy *shortcut.* Research shows that we automatically assign to good-looking individuals favorable traits such as talent, kindness, honesty and intelligence.

Keep in mind that “looking good” has nothing to do with Hollywood glamour. It means looking polished and professional, so that your credibility is high – and consequently, you are considered trustworthy. .

Unfortunately, No One Ever Told You . . .

Most people are surprised to learn that your degree of credibility can go up or down, depending upon the way you look.

For example, Cialdini reports that in staged trials, when the defendant was better looking than his victim, he was assessed a modest sum; but when the **victim**

was more attractive, the sum assessed nearly doubled. Cialdini says that juries give more favorable treatment to good-looking people, and that attractive defendants are twice as likely to avoid jail as unattractive ones.

Cialdini also asserts that we are not aware that physical attractiveness plays a role in our judgment. For example, men who saw a new-car ad with a seductive young woman in the ad rated the car as faster, more appealing, more expensive looking, better designed than did men who viewed the same ad without the female model. Yet when asked later, the men refused to believe that the presence of the young woman had influenced their judgments.

Once you discover how important "little" things are, you are in a position to change your life!

Tremendous Power - At Your Disposal

Now I'm going to share with you an amazing secret. It's so simple, yet so powerful. Here it is:

Wealthy people want you to tell them what to do.

A friend of mine actually shared this secret with me many years ago. She carried a line of expensive *objets d'art* and collectible paintings. Over the years she observed that the wealthier the client, the more they handed themselves over to her on a silver platter.

You see, wealthy people have always had the opposite problem of most people. They have more money than time. They would rather hire an expert to look after their rolling estates, their art acquisitions, etc., so that they have more time free to do what *they* do best: make money! My friend's clients almost always followed her advice and bought the pieces she recommended.

The Rest Of The Story

But, that's not the only secret I want to share with you. You see, in this busy world today, the ultra rich are not the only ones who are seeking **experts** in order to save time. We all do it – just ask Dr. Robert Cialdini! His whole theory about "shortcuts" is based upon the premise that we are all too busy to give up the time required to make educated decisions. We need help. Sometimes we use our own system of shortcuts, such as *Expensive* = *Good*; or *Looking Good* = *Good*.

The “Expert Impact”

There is yet another shortcut that serves us well, and I call it the Expert Impact. It seems that there is a deep-seated sense of duty to authority within us all. Cialdini’s research concluded that there is an inability to defy “authority,” and that it may stem from our sub-conscious recollection that failure to obey the “ultimate authority” resulted in the loss of paradise.

Cialdini’s research revealed that two things convey immediate authority: uniforms and titles. Since most of us are not admirals, generals, airline pilots or doctors, it is fortunate that several noted experts agree that a “powerful business suit” conveys as much authority as a title or a military uniform. Let me tell you a story that will explain the power of this secret, the Expert Impact.” .

A few years back I did a workshop for a big insurance company, and at a break one of the top salesmen, an expert in his field, questioned my advice to wear business attire to the client’s home for the follow-up call to conclude a deal and sign the papers. “They always tell me not to dress up, because we’re only sitting around the kitchen table to sign the papers, so I usually wear khakis and a polo shirt. I don’t want to lose rapport with my client by being too dressed up.”

“Of course they want you to dress informally,” I replied, “and do you know why?”

“I guess you’ll tell me,” he signed resignedly.

“It’s all about the Expert Impact.” I explained. “Imagine telling your clients that you researched their situation all night and concluded that with three children to put through college, you added another million to the amount of insurance that you previously recommended.”

The client thinks, “Ouch! That means I’ll have to cough up a lot more money than originally planned yesterday.” Saying No to advice given by a man sitting across the table wearing a polo shirt and chinos is easy. It’s just Good Old Joe’s advice. But saying No to an obvious Expert sitting across the table in a professional-looking business suit? What would it say about how much he cared for his children’s future if he said No when an Expert gave him expert advice?

More Proof . . .

This woman claims to be an expert in her field. Are you convinced? If not, why? Does it have anything to do with her posture? Clothing style? Clothing colors? Accessories? Find all the things you can see that suggest she might not be an experienced professional who is an expert in her field. If you find six things, you get an A plus.

Now take a look at the after photo of this expert, below.

Sandy Dumont “Before”

Sandy Dumont “After”

Did you have any of the following things on your list? (1) unkempt hair, (2) somber-looking lipstick and (3) no earrings. The other “image sins” were: (4) clunky, clumsy-looking shoes, (5) stockings too dark, (6) skirt is long and dowdy looking, (7) “holding hands with myself because mommy isn’t here,” (8) jacket in a dreary and unflattering color, (9) scarf looks droopy and uninteresting, (9) poor posture, and (10) negative body language.

Maybe you don't work with high-powered executives, like many of my clients do. Maybe you work with ordinary people. No matter who you are dealing with in your profession, looking like an expert will give you more credibility, open doors more easily and increase your success. Imagine how far it could take you with your business building efforts - whatever your goals are! Whoever your clients are!

So, how do you do it? How do you look like an expert every day?
Lesson 4 will give you the answer tomorrow. Check your email!