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Three Key Qualities*

By Beryl Wing, AICI, CIP

Do you know the three qualities necessary for any job? The keys for getting anything you want in life are: authority, friendliness and credibility. Differing amounts of these traits are required at different times for different jobs, but all are required for success in any interaction. Get the right mix and they smooth your way.

Authority is the power to get the job done, to have your instructions followed. Police need it. Flight attendants in emergencies need it. Executives, managers and supervisors need it. Judges have it. They persuade by virtue of strength.

Friendliness is the capacity to open people up, to persuade without force. It says, "I'm approachable" as opposed to "I'm powerful." Performers need it. Therapists need it. Reporters need it. It's not cloyingly sweet yellow-smiley-face bubbling, but the best qualities of friendship: sincerity, understanding, empathy.

Credibility is, of course, believability. It says, "you can trust that I know what I'm doing; you can rely on me to fulfill on my promise."

Every job requires 100% credibility for best results. But different jobs require different amounts of authority and likeability often in inverse ratio: the more authority you need, the less likeability is important and vice versa.

In sales (and Image Consulting, being entrepreneurial, is sales), you need credibility so your customers believe in you and your product. You also want a healthy dose of friendliness, so people are open to your pitch. But, you need only enough authority to close the sale. Good salespeople do not intimidate; they persuade in a partnership.

The CEO of a large corporation, however, dealing with powerful, influential senior people, needs more authority than likeability. Not that she doesn't want to be likable, but that is not the focus. She needs the power to get the job done. And high credibility. Those working for her need to *believe* she can do the job.

Credibility is symbolized by the tools of the trade. A stethoscope signals medical professional, be it doctor, nurse or trained technician.

A toolbox says carpenter, plumber, worker. The latest styles from Vogue announce fashion professional or socialite. Each trade has its tools. An almost universal credibility tool -subtle, but powerful - is wearing blue, the color of trust.

A word about fashion and credibility: Much as we Image Consultants and many women love fashion, to those in corporate, conservative and traditional cultures - especially men - fashion often signals extravagance, pointless change and frivolousness. So a hint of fashion goes a long way when dealing with these cultures.

To project authority and friendliness, the shapes, fabrics and colors we choose are key. Straight lines say power; curved lines say likable. Dark colors are powerful; light colors, friendly. Blue-based colors project more authority; yellow-based, more openness. Bright colors are friendly; muted more reserved. Woven fabrics project more and hence have more power than knits which are more open, more friendly. Structured garments are more powerful; unstructured, more casual and open. Finally, a suit in a single color has more power than a jacket and trouser or skirt of different colors, which is more approachable.

Finally, the authority garment par excellence is the jacket. It is the mantle of authority. A close second is a scarf worn over the shoulders, if this works with your style.

Consider your clientele, your clients' jobs and the combination of qualities need to for success in each. With careful strategy, clothes can project the winning blend of authority, friendliness and credibility.

*from: *Clothes Talk: What Men Know About Clothes That Women Don't*® by Beryl Wing



*Past-President of the Association of Image Consultants International New York Tri-State Chapter, Beryl Wing has appeared on **Inside Edition** discussing the presidential candidates' image during the 2004 presidential campaign and on "How They Won," Mo Rocca's History Channel primetime special on that election. Her Personal Shopping experience includes assignments at Macy's By Appointment and Paul Stuart and she is writing a book, **Clothes Talk: What Men Know About Clothes That Women Don't**®. She can be reached at 718.984.wing (718.984.9464) or berylwing@aol.com.*

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