

Casual Power – How to Power Up Your Nonverbal Communication and Dress Down for Success

- Excerpt -

Chapter III

What Are You Casually Communicating — *Before You Speak a Word?*

“The apparel oft proclaims the man.”

- Shakespeare, *Hamlet*.

Clothing is a language, a coded language, a strong, silent tongue that tells all to those who listen with their eyes. As part of the human race, we all have some degree of skill for reading people. And we actively do so on a regular basis. Whether or not you are consciously aware of engaging in the process of reading the nonverbal messages from others — you do. We all do. It is not about judging someone or being critical. We are simply information gatherers. This natural function stems from the primitive part of our brain. We are attempting to know about our environment. Who is this person in our space? Is it safe? Do we need to alter our behavior to survive? Or to get what we need or want?

As human beings, we are equipped with an invisible, yet sophisticated tele-communications system. With finely attuned antennae continually on “Roam,” we are broadcasting and receiving at all times. Our eyesight is a powerful component of those antennae. Accurately interpreted or not, visual clues help us ascertain as much information about other people as possible. Initially, the most compelling visual indicators about someone are their clothing and overall grooming.

In *Looking Terrific*, Emily Chao said: "**Clothing language is an important visual code that projects our talents, our needs, our personalities, and our destination.**" At this moment, go to a mirror and take an objective look at yourself. Try to see "you" through the eyes of a stranger. What are your clothing and grooming announcing about you? What destination are you heading for? Where would your clothing and grooming choices take you today?

Have you ever had the experience of your underwear showing or some part of your body, not intended for public display, unexpectedly revealed? Did you feel exposed? For you guys, how do you feel when your fly is *unintentionally* unzipped? Vulnerable? Naked? The truth is, male or female, **your psyche is unzipped all the time.** Clues to aspects of your conscious *and unconscious* thoughts and beliefs about yourself are actually hanging out there at all times. Barring any physical handicap, the ways you choose to dress, wear your hair, walk, talk, and breathe are open windows to the inner you. *You* are continually communicating something — always, whether verbally or nonverbally.

It is absolutely **impossible** to make a neutral statement. One of my clients, a prominent attorney, told me that he had lain awake at night for hours after hearing me speak on this subject at his law firm. He said that he had always taken care with how he dressed, especially for court. Yet, this theory that it was *impossible* to make a neutral statement was driving him crazy. The lawyer in him was challenged. He said his mind was obsessed with thinking of every feasible outfit that could possibly make a neutral statement. Someone dressed from head to toe in beige? No, a neutral color, but not a neutral nonverbal statement. At the minimum, it communicated that the person liked beige, thought they looked good in beige, belonged to a religious order that had particular tenets about beige — on and on. Frustrated, yet still driven to prove me wrong, he got up and looked up the meaning of *neutral* in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Finding no real evidence there to support his case, he went back to bed to count sheep.

Just as he was drifting off to sleep, he had a flash of inspiration. He said it was as if he were floating on the ceiling looking down on his pajama-clad body splayed all over the bed below. (Yes, he was taking up over half the bed while leaving only a little room for his wife.) It was then that he realized it — that even when he was sleeping, his choice of pajamas or lack thereof, his body position on the bed (including legs, arms, and

hands), his facial expression, and his breathing all contributed to making a (nonverbal) statement about him. Aspects of his nature and his preferences were, indeed, revealed. The next morning he called to inform me that the judge had ruled in my favor on the issue of the impossibility of making a neutral statement. His last words were that he intended to become fluent in this clothing language thing.

If while we sleep, we unconsciously broadcast information about ourselves at the nonverbal level, then when awake, we are even more actively sending signals. Statistics show that in the first thirty seconds of meeting someone, *you* determine at least three important factors concerning that person.

First Impressions

In the first thirty seconds, these three factors are evaluated (accurately or not):

- 1) Socioeconomic Status**
- 2) Educational Level**
- 3) Desirability (to you)**

Based on their appearance, clothing, grooming, posture, and expression, you size people up, usually unconsciously. What's more, depending upon your perceptions, you decide how you are going to initially respond to and interact with them. All of this in just thirty seconds? Yes, remember, it is impossible to make a neutral statement.

When you speak, your voice tones, speech patterns, grammar, and accent leave further clues about your background and lifestyle. Most people fail to recognize an important communication rule: Nonverbal messages actively transmit from a person's appearance and mannerisms while he or she is verbally communicating. Contrary to what you may believe, **what you say does not erase the impression you are making through your appearance.**

Excerpt from *Casual Power* by Sherry Maysonave, Chapter III.

The communication model below is used widely in communication classes and by communication experts. I first encountered these statistics in my first public speaking course: *Powerful Presentations* taught by Robert Kiyosaki. This model reveals some amazing statistics about the influential role of one's physical appearance even while involved in verbal communication.

Components of Verbal Communication

- **Words** 7%
- **Tone** (Pitch, Timbre, Tempo, Volume, Emotion) 38%
- **Physical / Visual** 55% !!!

Take a look at the percentages here. All the nuances of spoken communications are listed.

Some of you probably believe that your actual words, the content of what you have to say, carry more weight than seven percent. Do they really? Let's say that you just had a major disagreement with someone, and he or she screams at you in an angry voice with his or her face distorted and his/her fist thrust forward, "*Well, I'm sorry!*" Or, using a heavily sarcastic inflection, quietly, almost under his breath, with his jaws clenched in a tight smile: "*W-e-l-l, I'm s-o-r-ry!*" Do you feel forgiving? What if he says the same words sincerely, looking at you pleadingly, with regret dripping from each syllable, "*W-ell, I'm sor-ry.*" How do you feel then? In all three instances, the words were identical, but the intended messages were entirely different.

In a professional setting, your clothing, grooming, and posture are an enormous portion of the 55 percent, representing the physical/visual in your communication. If you are exclusively invested in your content and you ignore the power of your image, you are missing a critical element of your overall effectiveness. You may be working too hard. Are you allowing a professional image to support you on a *daily* basis, especially on dress-down days?

The visual modality is a potent force in our society. You need to be concerned with not only your first impression, but also with your ongoing impression. The comic strip, "Peanuts," drives this point home. In one of the cartoons, Charlie Brown notices that the fronts of Linus's shoes are freshly shined, but the backs are scuffed. Charlie Brown points this out to

Linus with a question in his tone. Linus tells Charlie Brown that he knows, he shined his shoes like that on purpose. Linus said, “*I care about what people think of me when I enter a room. I don’t care what they think when I leave.*” While Linus was concerned with his first impression, he failed to recognize the power of his last impression.

Have you ever noticed that when someone looks marvelous, your mind does not imagine that person looking slovenly? Unfortunately, the same is true when you look lousy. **If you slob out on dress-down days, you imprint an indelible slob image of yourself in the minds of your superiors and coworkers.** If your customers or the senior executives of your company cannot easily envision you with your current dress habits performing a certain role, it is not likely that you will even come to mind for consideration when an opportunity or position comes available.

When two people of fairly equal qualifications are being considered for a job or promotion, the one who is *consistently* dressed professionally and well groomed will win

every time. In my consulting work, innumerable executives have shared that they have received promotions and raises because of the constancy and reliability of their professional dress. Combined with their businesslike demeanor and attitudes, they gained the edge. Often times, those individuals have been selected over and above other contenders who were better qualified in different ways.

A professional image opens doors and makes you more money. A formal study conducted by Economists Daniel Hamermesh of the University of Texas at Austin and Jeff Biddle of Michigan State University claims that people who are *perceived* as good-looking and attractive earn considerably higher incomes than those who are not.¹ This phenomenon is not limited to occupations where looks obviously play a big part, such as acting, modeling, or sales. Their research found that looks also account for higher earnings in jobs where appearance presumably plays no role: construction, factory work, and telemarketing. In addition, the Hamermesh-Biddle project reported that good looks may increase a worker’s productivity if he or she must deal with colleagues and customers face to face, on a regular basis.

¹ Good Looks Can Mean a Pretty Penny on the Job; *The Wall Street Journal*, Marketplace, November 23, 1993

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My own research coincides with their findings. An attractive professional image engenders greater confidence and higher self-esteem, which translate into better performance on the job.

Perceived attractiveness is a major component in a professional image. "Attractiveness" has definite standards in the dressed-down workplace. When determining what your professional image communicates, count your dress-down apparel as a minus. Casual dress is still relatively new to the business arena and is not "*perceived*" as being as professional and powerful as traditional business suits. If you want to be perceived as a serious player in the game of business and to be considered professionally attractive, you must be extremely selective with your dress-down attire. The following pages and chapters illustrate the details of *Business Casual* attire that empowers you by communicating credibility and authority, and by commanding respect.

When I use the word "attractive," I do not mean breathtaking beauty or handsomeness. Only a small percentage of the population is born with fabulous good looks, but **anyone can be perceived as attractive**. Anyone! Most people are not in touch with their most appealing qualities and features. Even if they are, they often don't know what to do with their strong points to maximize their true attractive potential. Flattering professional clothing, the right haircut, well-done makeup, excellent grooming, simple — yet rich-looking — accessories are always attractive in the workplace (and everywhere else).

Sincere joy, smiles from the heart, and positive attitudes are also always perceived as attractive. "Perceived" merely means to comprehend, to grasp mentally, or to take note of, to observe. When you perceive someone as attractive, you notice them. They are pleasant to look at, pleasing to the eye. Your eyes are literally drawn to them or to some aspect of them. There are hundreds of thousands of men and women who are far from naturally good-looking. Nonetheless, they have a polished way of dressing, carry themselves well, and exude a positive confidence. Together these qualities make them highly attractive. They are often *perceived* as striking and stunningly attractive.

With that in mind, let's look at that nebulous word, ATTRACTIVE. What is its root word? Attractiveness is simply the ability to attract, to bring in, to draw to, to magnetize what you need or want at any given time. Attractiveness is appeal. Appeal is power. Attractiveness is professionally empowering.

People Perceived as ATTRACTIVE Have Higher Incomes

Are You Maximizing Your Earning Potential with Casually *Attractive*, Professional Dress in Your Workplace?

My mentor, Robert Pante, author of *Dressing to Win*, stresses that "**Success attracts more success.**" He believes that if you *consistently* dress as if you were *already* successful that you will just naturally attract success (or more success) to you. Without doubt, Pante is absolutely correct. I have seen his theory proven again and again with myself, my clients, my family, and my friends.

Success leaves visual clues in one's appearance. In the movie "Pretty Woman," Julia Roberts plays a prostitute who is picked up by a wealthy businessman. She tells him that she makes \$100 an hour. His response is, "*You make \$100 an hour and you have a safety pin holding up your boot?*" Obviously, visual clues of her proclaimed success were absent. If she really made \$100 an hour on a regular basis, she would not wear boots with a broken zipper.

Male or female, the fabric quality and condition of your clothing, your shoes, your jewelry, your hair, and your nails are all visual clues to your success level. I am not saying that you should drape yourself with status symbols. I am saying that you can never overdo real quality and excellent grooming. To nonverbally communicate success, make QUALITY your middle name.

The Case of Anne:

One of my clients, *Anne*, has proven Pante's theory that a successful image attracts greater success. Anne has been my client for several years now and has undergone a major transformation of her image.

When I first met Anne, she appeared plain, looking extremely ordinary, although she was ambitious and intelligent. At that time, her mid-

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management position in the marketing department of a high-technology company was not making her completely happy. The promotion bug had bitten Anne — and it had bitten hard. She yearned to be the senior vice-president in charge of all marketing for this company. Anne told me this in confidence when we had our initial consultation. She also shared that she had a dream living deep in her heart of becoming exceptionally wealthy. Anne wanted to make a major difference in the world, and she understood that money would expand her influence. Beginning at an early age, Anne dreamed of being a philanthropist, donating huge sums of money to causes she deemed worthy, especially projects for children.

Considering Anne's goals, I recommended a complete makeover, and to her credit she did it all. She went for it, 100 percent plus. We started the process with a stylish haircut, and then we assessed every detail of her overall image. Her new haircut and highlights set off her face and silhouette in a dramatic way. Next, we updated Anne's makeup and manicured her nails. Under my direction, she gave up glasses, got contact lenses, and she had her teeth professionally bleached. Anne also bought a new watch that was a combination of sterling silver and 14-karat gold. Together, we emptied her closet of just about everything. Anne's clothing choices in the past had been unflattering to her body type, making her look heavy and frumpy, which she was not. The garments (from Anne's closet) that she donated to a charity fell far short of communicating that she aspired to be a high-powered marketing executive.

To rebuild her wardrobe, we began with new business clothes because Anne's first priority was to rise in the company. Our strategy was for her to look the part of a top executive *before* she assumed the role. Her company had a comprehensive casual dress code, and most of the employees and mid-management showed up rather sloppily. To communicate that Anne was taking her job seriously and that she was to be taken seriously, she needed a Business Casual wardrobe that was on the dressier end of casual.

Investing in herself, Anne used money from her savings to buy four striking, business-like casual outfits, complete with shoes, hose, and earrings. We also selected these basics: two set-the-world-on-fire business suits for her important meeting days, a high-quality handbag, a soft leather briefcase. Anne wore *only* her new outfits until she could afford to add more. Each pay period she added one or two garments or accessories that

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allowed her to create new outfits with the other pieces. Anne bought only according to our plan, and only what looked stunning on her.

The first few weeks her cohorts teased her unmercifully about her dramatic change. More importantly, she received compliments from the CEO, other senior executives, and a few board members. In about six weeks, the VP of Marketing sent Anne to New York to represent the company in an important meeting regarding a pending contract. Was she successful? Yes — even the CEO of that company called the Vice President of Marketing (of Anne's company) just to say that Anne had done an outstanding job. He reported that they were ready to sign a contract with another company, but they were so impressed with Anne that they sealed the deal on the spot. As a result, finalizing strategic partnerships became a regular part of Anne's schedule. Within three months, she was moved up to be in charge of another division that focused on developing and managing strategic accounts. Anne continued to add to her business wardrobe as her responsibilities and her salary increased.

Eventually the Vice President of Marketing resigned. Guess who got the job? In ten short months, Anne received the hoped-for promotion to Senior Vice President of Marketing.

Anne vows that she would never have been given the opportunity to prove herself and to demonstrate her talents and skills if she had not made the change to a consistent highly professional image, even within the context of a casual dress code. She also exhibited the ability to dress in more traditional business attire when the situation called for it, and she astutely discerned when those times were. Anne claims that she would not have been sent

to New York to represent the company if she had not been trusted to look the part of a professional, capable, successful person, representing a thriving, on-the-move company. Today, Anne has built a world-class wardrobe, and she is ready to go anywhere on short notice and look fabulous. *All* of her clothing makes her look like a million dollars. She wants not a thread or a button less as she has happily reaped the rewards many times over.

There is one particular incident that I call Anne's "harvest" story. She was flying back to California from the East Coast after visiting her family for the Christmas holidays. (This incident occurred after Anne's image overhaul and her big promotion.) Anne looked chic and successful — even

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though comfortably casual — when she arrived at the airport that morning. When it was time to board, a flight attendant approached her, saying that a gentleman in First Class had invited her to join him there for the duration of the flight. In fact, he had already paid for her upgrade! Because she loved to fly First Class on long flights, and because she was adventurous and single, Anne accepted.

This gentleman did not turn out to be Anne's soulmate, but intrigue did occur. Anne had a marvelous time. And when they deplaned that day, Anne and the gentleman had become business partners in a technology venture that has since made them both *millions* of dollars!

Anne's dream of being exceptionally wealthy is well within reach now. She is immensely generous, giving to numerous causes. Because of her significant monetary contributions to an organization for gravely ill children, Anne was asked to be one of three national spokespersons to raise awareness and funding. Today, as the international voice for this nonprofit group, Anne has a dynamic reputation and she helps millions of children and their families. Her willingness to change and grow has paid handsomely. Waltzing with her childhood dreams, she radiates genuine happiness and confidence. Anne lives the proverb that "success attracts more success." Her results confirm its accuracy.

Anne's story demonstrates another tenet of my image mentor, Robert Pante: ***"The world treats you as you treat yourself."*** Anne's story embodies this statement. When she invested in herself, others were willing to invest in her. The response she received from friends, coworkers, and strangers dramatically changed when she loved herself enough to use part of her savings to invest in her dreams. The new clothing and image changes were just tools and outer symbols of how she felt about herself. They served as her "Dreamcatchers."

How do you treat yourself? What quality of dress-down clothing do you allow yourself to have and wear? I use the words "have and wear" because I have known some people who will buy nice clothing, but will not wear it regularly. They save it — the garments literally hang in their closets, seldom worn. Some of those folks even hire me to shop with them to ensure that their selections are right for them. I have even discovered some people who purchase clothing to simply hang in their closets — the price tags are never removed, the clothing is never worn. These people do not treat themselves well. They have an active personal saboteur. These

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folks push success away by not wearing the quality clothing they actually own.

Do you exude casual power? The best measuring stick is to look honestly at your responses from others. Are you getting the response you want from the world on a regular basis? Use the questions below as your gauge. Let's find out where you rate in treating yourself well.

This questionnaire requires your close attention to score properly. There are directions after each question that tell you how to score your answer — sometimes a Yes answer is a plus, so you add one point. Sometimes a Yes answer is a minus, so you subtract one point. The value of a Yes answer and a No answer may vary from question to question. The questions cover a wide territory so that you can gauge the overall nature of the responses you receive from others.

- Do you *naturally* attract the kind of people you want to do business with?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do you *naturally* attract the kind of people you want as friends?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do you *naturally* attract the kind of people you want as lovers?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Are you offered jobs or promotions in the industry or departments you desire to work in?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do you get those special *plum* assignments?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
Every industry, every job has an occasional gem assignment, if you answered no, note the type of person who usually gets the opportunity-filled assignments.
- Do you receive compliments on your appearance?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do your compliments come from people in positions you aspire to?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do your compliments come from people in positions of power?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do you often have to fend off people who are not your type or people who are in some way distasteful to you?
(Subtract 1 point for Yes; add 1 point for No.)
- Do you consistently get excellent tables in restaurants?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)

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- Do you consistently get the worst tables in restaurants, such as near the kitchen?
(Subtract 1 point for Yes; add 1 point for No.)
- How do waiters treat you — are they slow to serve you?
(Subtract 1 point for Yes; add 1 point for No.)
- Do waiters go out of their way to please you or give you excellent service?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do people tend to look away or fidget when you are speaking?
(Subtract 1 point for Yes; add 1 point for No.)
- When you meet someone that you have only spoken with on the telephone, do they ever respond with, "You are Erin Gee. You are not at all what I expected." Has this ever happened to you?
(Subtract 1 point for Yes; add 1 point for No.)
- Do salespeople in a crowded store find time to assist you?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do salespeople in a crowded store allow others to press in, waiting on you last?
(Subtract 1 point for Yes; add 1 point for No.)
- Do people light up when they see you, their eyes opening wider?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)
- Do people grimace when they see you, their eyes narrowing?
(Subtract 1 point for Yes; add 1 point for No.)
- Do people step in front of you (or attempt to) when you are waiting in line, such as at the movies or grocery store?
(Subtract 1 point for Yes; add 1 point for No.)
- Do strangers smile spontaneously at you?
(Add 1 point for Yes; subtract 1 point for No.)

How do **YOU** rate in Positive Responses?

0 to 6 points

You are **Positive Response Disabled**, in desperate need of H-E-L-P. You are in the Danger Zone in how you treat yourself. You are invisible to most, maybe even to yourself. Are you masochistic? You think of your dreams as having no real possibility, just fantasy. You never valet park, and you are not having enough fun in life. You probably believe that casual means excessively relaxed, sloppy attire. Having no casual power, you are *total* makeover material. Could you possibly deserve and handle that much attention?

7 to 11 points

You are **Positive Response Deprived**. You are still in peril of being invisible. Generally, you are not masochistic, but you may easily slide into martyrdom. Your dreams seem farfetched, as if they would take miraculous luck to actually happen. You take pride in your practicality and like to blend in with the average. Your dress-down apparel sorely lacks any panache and is primarily permanent-press fabrics or blends of polyester. More than likely, you don't send any casual wear out for professional cleaning or pressing. With almost zero casual power, you may be the most resistant. Would *you* dare consider a makeover?

12 to 15 points

You are **Positive Response Deficient**. You need large doses of Positive Response Supplements, such as buying higher-quality clothing, getting regular massages, etc. You think about your dreams, but you settle for less *too* easily. You may have a leather interior in your car and you sometimes valet park. While you do possess some casual power, you still do not fully grasp the concept. In your dress-down clothing, you tend to cheat yourself by shopping mostly for bargains instead of going for what makes you look and feel like a million. Leap into the next level with a wow makeover!

16 to 19 points

You are **Positive Response Delighted**. You treat yourself well. Do you drive a Jaguar, Mercedes, or BMW? You valet park frequently and occasionally fly First Class. Keep striving for positive responses ALL the time, in every area of your life. I suspect you slack off in some areas — like not having only world-class casual clothing and accessories. Purge your closet of anything less and watch your casual power soar. Challenge yourself to actualize your dreams and reach your full potential. The world needs you!

20 to 21 points

You are a **Positive Response Deity**. If you scored 20 to 21 points, you always fly First Class (or do you have your own plane?). You think limousines instead of taxis. You drive the

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most luxurious Jaguar, Mercedes, or BMW. Your second car may be a Ferrari or a Lamborghini. You love high-quality clothing and you dress down with panache. Casual Power? Oh, yes! Life should be delicious for you. You have a lot to offer. Are you making a positive difference in the world for others? Send me your story!

How do you feel about your score? Like it or not, the responses you receive strongly indicate what you are **truly** communicating. To become more conscious of what you are projecting, start observing every tiny nuance of other people's responses to you. Some of you are screaming, "*I don't live my life for other people!*" No, of course you don't. I would not encourage you to do so. Just use other people's responses as a valuable barometer to gauge your nonverbal messages. Are you "on course" or "off course" with reaching your destination of success and greater success?

Two of my most powerful mentors, Robert Kiyosaki and Robert Pante, teach how to achieve success and experience greater joy and fulfillment in life. They go about it quite differently, each in their own style, but their end results are similar. I have combined four of their principles for my own formula for empowerment. Integrate these philosophies and become a "dream-catcher," for yourself and for others.

Empowering Principles for Dream-Catching

"For things to change, first I must change."

- Robert Kiyosaki

"The world treats you as you treat yourself."

- Robert Pante

"The response you get is your true communication."

- Robert Kiyosaki

"A rich, successful image attracts success and greater success."

- Robert Pante

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The nonverbal communication inherent in one's physical appearance is similar to the steering wheel of a car. For your car to go in the direction you want, you have to look and steer in that particular direction. If it is not going that way, do you get out and yell at your car, kick the tires, and blame everything but your steering? First, you have to *change* your steering choices from the inside of your car. The same theory applies here; you have to decide what your goals are, who you want to be, and where you want to go. You must consciously choose to navigate the mapped route that will take you there, including dressing the part *before* you arrive. (If you are invited to the Governor's Ball, you do not drive there first and then — and only then — begin to contemplate what clothing you are going to wear to be appropriate.)

Distractions when driving create hazards and often result in accidents with serious injuries or fatalities. This phenomenon also occurs in professional dress — a distracting, unprofessional image places your success potential in jeopardy. Are you familiar with the little voice in your head that chatters on about others' choices of clothing, haircuts, or anything that distracts you from the business at hand? Other people can experience that same voice regarding *you*.

Distractions invite intrusive static. Any aspects of your physical image that create negative distractions set up roadblocks to your communications. Remember, the physical/ visual is 55 percent of verbal communication, and that figure doubles for nonverbal. Listening attentively with 100 percent focus is difficult enough without asking for interference. If you generate negative distractions, you have to work harder to have your message heard and to earn respect and credibility.

Are you dressing down to attract or to distract? Distractions can be formidable — so powerful that it is impossible to overcome them — resulting in a handicap to your personal power. When personal power is diminished, so is your likelihood of success — the best reason for professional dress standards to incorporate clean-cut grooming and simplicity of style.

There are four main traits that are essential for you to project in order to perform well in any industry.

- **Personal Power**
- **Credibility**

- **Authority**
- **Trustworthiness**

These qualities, when authentically communicated, always boost your ability to succeed.

When individuals or groups in my workshops name the qualities they most want to project, *power* usually heads the list. I am continually amazed at their responses when I ask them, "What is *power*?" Generally, I hear replies like, "*Control*," "*Dominance*," "*Money*." I want to be perfectly clear regarding this point. When I speak of *power* in the context of "power dressing," whether power-casual or traditional business attire, I am not referring to control over another person. Dictionaries define *power* as simply "***the ability to do.***" A professional image is a *power* tool because it *increases* and *strengthens* your ability to achieve.

What do *power*, *credibility*, *authority*, and *trustworthiness* actually look like as clothing, especially when you are dressed casually? Over the next few pages, revealing makeovers show how these traits can be nonverbally communicated through a casual image. These examples came directly from my client files. The artist copied real-life photographs of the transitions, the before and after. At times, hair color or another feature was changed to disguise the identity of the individual. Be sure to read the commentary of the "Before and After" shots to catch the finer distinctions of precisely which garments, grooming, accessories, and postures communicate these qualities.

[Images Omitted]

Before, Jim does little to inspire trust. His shaggy hair and beard narrow his eyes, giving his face a closed, menacing look. His shabby knit shirt, brown jeans, and frayed sneakers announce loudly that he is sorely unsuccessful as an accountant. Jim's posture, especially his slumped shoulders, apologizes for his presence. He appears negative, depressed, and closed, especially with his hands in his pockets. Jim's accounting firm supports a casual dress code. Even so, would you be excited about hiring him to handle your taxes and financial accounts, based on his appearance in Figure 3:1? If you answered yes, let's hope that your affairs are not too complex because his nonverbal communication suggests that Jim suffers from an acute lack of attention to detail, at least in his professional presentation, especially his attire.

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Do you recognize Jim as the same man *after* his makeover? Would you be inclined to trust him? Jim courageously shaved his ten-year-old beard and moustache after learning that facial hair could unconsciously elicit distrust from others. Initially, he had grown it to make him look older and more intelligent — or so he thought. Actually, because he was concerned about his receding hairline, Jim had relished his ability to grow facial hair. (In fact, Jim actually had a lot of hair. He had overreacted to a slight thinning of hair on the sides of his forehead.) Over the years, he had allowed his beard to get scruffy to the point where it was distracting and dragging him down.

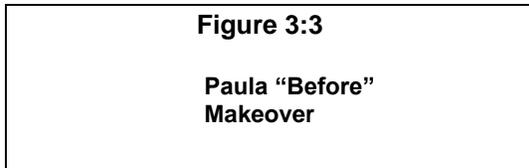
The shave and haircut transported Jim into living in the current world. The starched-collared blue shirt and navy jacket elevate his visual presentation, increasing his personal power immediately. Dark blue is an excellent color to inspire trust on an unconscious level, as are clean-cut grooming and crisp clothing. To project ultimate trustworthiness, Jim should not have his hands in his pockets. When inspiring trust, your hands should be easily seen to communicate that you have nothing to hide and to invite conversation from others. While Jim was excited about his makeover, he was feeling a bit shy about his face showing so clearly (and being photographed) after years of hiding behind a beard. Even Jim was surprised that his hands just unconsciously found their way into his pockets.

We finished Jim's professional, yet dressed-down look with high-quality wool trousers, a leather belt, and leather hard-soled shoes. Jim now looks as if he handles lucrative accounts. Visually inspiring trust and credibility, Jim exudes casual power.

One year after Jim's makeover, he landed a job with one of the big eight accounting firms. He reported that his makeover got him excited about his life again; through this process, Jim reconnected with his hope to achieve his dreams.

Inspiring Trust:

[Images Omitted]



Paula is a commercial real-estate agent. One of the partners of the company hired me to work with her. Paula's job was on the line if she did not change to a more professional look.

The Before Paula: Her frizzy, wiry hair contributes to a look of instability in her overall image. The gypsy-like dress adds to her doubtful appearance, doing nothing to inspire professional trust. Paula has been an active agent in the same city for seven years. Would you have guessed? She has struggled financially and, not surprisingly, has failed at landing long-term corporate management accounts. Paula claims that she thought that the '90s dress-down trend made the theories of professional dress obsolete — especially in real estate. She has learned differently as her income has dramatically increased since her makeover.

Smoothing out Paula's naturally curly hair was not enough. She needed another cut and color to give her a capable, trustworthy look upon first impression. The shorter cut made her wavy hair easier to manage as well as highlighting her strong jawline. Paula had been using an inexpensive home color-bleaching kit on her hair — and it showed. We decided to go back to her natural color, a lovely light auburn that enhanced her beautiful soft, brown eyes and her skin tone.

We chucked the multicolored, overly casual dress, but Paula strongly stated that she is most comfortable in long flowing lines. Her new chocolate-brown skirt is long and still has some fullness, but the overall look is simply tailored. The multicolored tweed jacket satisfies her urge for color, but it exudes professionalism. Since Paula is 5' 4" tall, we chose a

solid-colored brown top to go under the tweed jacket. Worn with the brown skirt, this gives her one line of color all the way up, including the brown boots. The tweed jacket works as a dynamic accent; this makes her look taller and creates a more pulled-together vertical image. Simplicity and high-quality fabrics work together to inspire trust.

Instead of the distracting, long-feather-dangle earrings in Figure 3:3, Paula now wears an unusual amber earring that picks up the detail from the button on the jacket. This congruency adds an air of polish and trustworthiness. High-quality suede boots and a soft briefcase add to Paula's professionalism. Are you inspired to trust her capabilities now?

Paula jumped on the professional dress bandwagon and has remained consistent with the goals of her makeover — she always puts her best foot forward. Four years after Paula's makeover, where is she? Paula is a full partner in the commercial real-estate firm where she began as a struggling agent. Paula's current reputation as a dynamic businesswoman precedes her and opens doors automatically.

Dress-Down Characteristics That Inspire Trust

■ Impeccable Grooming

- ◆ Clean, shiny hair, professionally cut
(Hair can have flair, but not *too* outrageous in style or color)
- ◆ No facial hair
- ◆ Squeaky-clean body
(Not too much perfume or fragrance, especially true for men)
- ◆ Well-kept nails, clean and manicured

■ Pristine Clothing and Accessories

- ◆ Clothing must be spotless, pressed, and well-tailored
Pants and trousers, regardless of fabric, should have crisp creases
- ◆ Good quality fabrics — simple, tailored lines best
- ◆ Harmonious blend of colors and textures of fabrics
- ◆ Blue tones* — navy blue, dark blue, and royal blue positively affect the perception of trust according to color psychology experts
*Men wearing brown suits tend to elicit distrust. This is not true for women.
- ◆ High-quality, well-maintained shoes
- ◆ Simple high-quality jewelry
Women — metal watches; not too many accessories worn at one time
Men — metal watches; no neck chains

■ Friendly, Positive Demeanor

Excerpt from *Casual Power* by Sherry Maysonave, Chapter III.

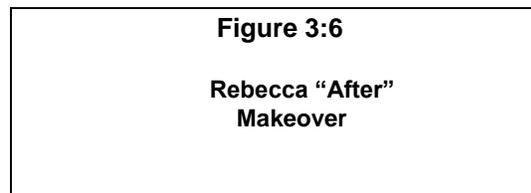
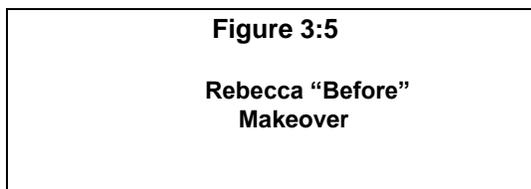
- ◆ Eye contact — establish and maintain
- ◆ Erect posture — shoulders back
- ◆ Open body language — trustworthiness has nothing to hide

Real trust is earned. These dress-down characteristics help you gain the opportunity to demonstrate your trustworthiness. Dress the part to inspire trust, then win further trust.

Exuding Personal Power:

True personal power comes from within. It can be enhanced and developed, but it cannot be given. However, I find that most people are not in touch with their innate power. Often, with the right haircut and empowering clothing, their body shifts and a sense of power just pops out. It is easily observed by others. For example:

[Images Omitted]



Rebecca is an attorney. She graduated from law school six years ago, but she failed to graduate her girlish collegiate look. The senior partner of her law firm, also a woman, asked Rebecca to upgrade her image. The firm was rapidly growing, and she needed to introduce Rebecca to new clients — all wealthy. She wanted them to feel confident about Rebecca's ability to handle the legal entanglements of their estates. Rarely involved in litigation, the firm had a semi-casual dress code. Of course, with court appearances, traditional suiting was expected. Rebecca's work was excellent; it was only the professional image that was lacking.

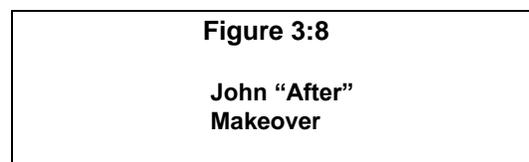
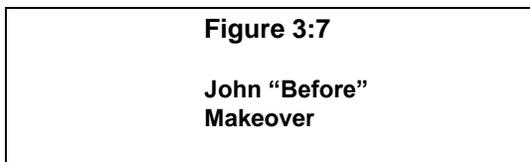
First, we gave Rebecca a new hair style. Getting rid of the sweet-little-girl hairdo, including barrettes, gave her a sophisticated look instantly. Her makeup needed fine-tuning to brighten her pretty face and to accent the strength of her jawline. The long floral skirts and soft-shirt jackets of her college days had to go. **To bring her up to date, we dressed her in a high-quality, businesslike pantsuit.** The jacket, exquisitely tailored, adds a sense of potency to Rebecca's image. Her I'm-just-a-girl flats were traded

in for low-heeled classic pumps that exude high-dollar class. Even though dressed down from conventional lawyer garb, Rebecca exudes personal power and commands respect.

Rebecca's makeover took place a few years ago. Ambitious by nature, she is the personality type that takes action when she gets information that can help her succeed. When Rebecca assimilated how a professional image — when paired with her intelligence and her credentials — could take her to the top, she went for it wholeheartedly. Rebecca's success story is similar to Anne's (found earlier in this chapter). After upgrading her image, Rebecca's success soared. She was made a partner in the law firm in only one year, a time frame that broke all precedents for that firm. She now owns a beautiful home — one that by most standards would be called a mansion — and she has her own driver to transport her through the large city she inhabits. Rebecca is happily married to a successful architect, and she is living the good life!

Exuding Personal Power:

[Images Omitted]



John is a stockbroker. His prestigious firm has two casual days a week. John was mystified about dressing down in anything other than khakis and golf shirts, with sneakers or soft-soled deck shoes. He had no power-casual clothing in his closet, nor did he grasp the concept. Being small in stature, John felt that he worked overtime to establish a powerful, notable presence, especially when dressed down. Before his makeover, John looks ordinary.

The power-casual outfit you see John wearing in Figure 3:8 is one of the many he purchased during our shopping expedition. Once he experienced himself in my definition of power-casual attire, he was hooked. With John's dark coloring, we chose black as his best neutral color to build a wardrobe around. The triple-pleated slacks are of exceptional quality, 100 per cent refined, tropical wool; the excellent drape of the fabric

Excerpt from *Casual Power* by Sherry Maysonave, Chapter III.

proclaims superb quality. Dark slacks combined with a black-and-beige herringbone jacket brings the black color up the body but adds light toward his face. This makes John look taller. He still gets to wear a soft knit shirt, but it is one of exceptional fabric quality. The lizard slip-on shoes and tipped belt finish his power-casual look, adding richness and panache. While John works in his office, the jacket can stay on the back of his chair, if he likes.

We updated John's haircut by getting rid of the left-sided part he had coaxed for years. We had him switch to a metal watch, which added manly strength to his overall image. Looking this successful, John can go anywhere in the world dressed down, and still exude personal power and command respect.

Six months after John's makeover, he got a substantial raise and he met the woman of his dreams — a classy lady. John says that she would never have looked twice at the "Before" John. Today, they are happily married and John's stock portfolio continues to go up in value.

Remember, power means "the ability to do." Inherent in possessing power is having choices. Fine clothing communicates that the wearer has unlimited options, not constrained by budget concerns. Poor clothing communicates the opposite. As in a negotiation, personal power drops if one "needs" the deal so badly that there is no choice but to consent to unfair demands.

To nonverbally communicate power, looking successful and choosy is part of the package, and so is wearing current, but not trendy, classic clothing. Outdated clothing says that you have not made enough money to have the option of purchasing clothes recently.

Dress-Down Basics That Communicate Power

■ High-Quality Clothing and Accessories

- ◆ Rich, dark colors
Black and navy are the best power neutral colors. Dark, rich shades of green, red, brown, and taupe also project a sense of power.
- ◆ Quality natural-fiber fabrics
- ◆ Harmonious color schemes — tone on tone, monochromatic dressing, or coordinated separates
- ◆ Long sleeves
A must to communicate maximum power
- ◆ Straight-lined tailored garments
- ◆ Excellent-quality shoes and belts, maintained perfectly
- ◆ Simple, expensive-looking jewelry (metal watches only)
- ◆ Shoulder pads, small — important for women
- ◆ Jackets and sport coats always add distinction and power — must be of quality fabric and a superb fit

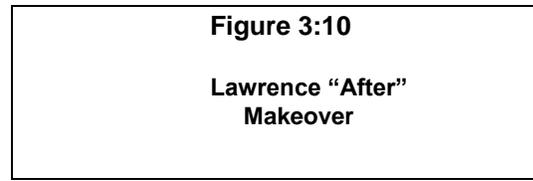
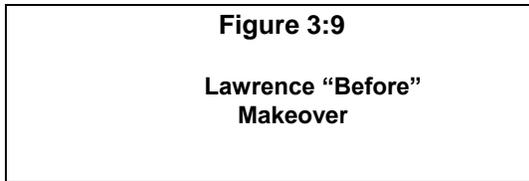
■ Impeccable Grooming (See grooming list on how to inspire trust, page XX)

■ Positive Demeanor (See demeanor list on how to inspire trust, page XX)

- ◆ Firm handshake
- ◆ Confident attitude
Personal power resides in your confidence to open doors and access other options. (Real power does not boast or throw weight around unnecessarily)

Communicating Authority:

[Images Omitted]



Lawrence is an upper-level manager in a high-tech company that has an across-the-board casual dress code. He aspires to be the CEO of a computer software company that does international business. To accomplish this, Lawrence must increase the authority he nonverbally communicates. An outdoors kind of guy, Lawrence is accustomed to dressing in an overly relaxed manner — too far down the casual ladder to project that he is capable of becoming an authority figure.

Authority always speaks and dresses with hints of formality. In his plaid shirt, faded jeans, and hiking boots, Lawrence completely fails to project any indication of formality. He doesn't even appear to be upper-executive material. He falls even shorter of looking like the CEO of an international company.

Lawrence eagerly cooperated in his makeover, and it shows. He thought the military look made him appear authoritative, but his hair was too short for his large head. Instead of looking authoritative, he looked more like he was recovering from chemotherapy. We had to let his hair grow a few weeks for the short and classic — yet vibrant and healthy — style of Figure 3:10.

Communicating authority incorporates many of the characteristics from inspiring trust and exuding power. We dressed Lawrence in current classic (not faddish) clothing, which is especially important to exude an aura of authority. In Figure 3:10, he is wearing a high-quality, tropical-wool suit in black, which he found amazingly comfortable. Paired with the dark suit, the crisp-white, long-sleeved, fine-cotton banded-collar shirt exudes formality, yet is dressed down from the traditional suit-and-tie look. The shirt was not heavily starched, but the collar and cuffs were impeccably

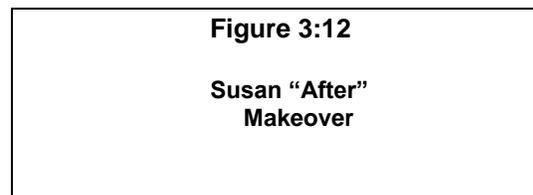
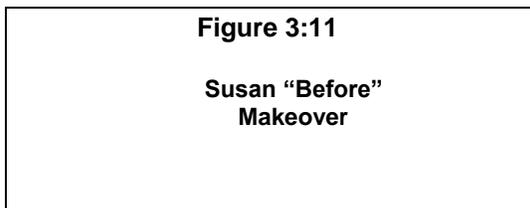
Excerpt from *Casual Power* by Sherry Maysonave, Chapter III.

pressed. Contrasting color tones — dark with light — lend a definite air of authority. High-quality, all-leather tie shoes (not slip-ons) and a high-caliber, all-leather dress belt add the finishing authoritative touches.

Lawrence was shocked at how comfortable his new duds felt on his body. His powerful, commanding reflection in the mirror wowed even him. When I last spoke to Lawrence, he had had two job offers — both for CEO positions.

Communicating Authority:

[Images Omitted]



Susan is an art history professor at a major university, and she is up for tenure next year. Intelligent? Most definitely, yet Susan has a tentative look that does not bode well for her goals. Her physical presence lacks authority and power in Figure 3:11, before her makeover. Susan's stringy hair must be cut, otherwise she will look like one of her students or a struggling artist. Her pale face with no makeup and her baggy clothing add to her lost waif image.

Would you recognize Susan as the same woman now? We layered her baby-fine hair so it did not hang limply around her face. Minimal makeup adds life and vibrancy to her delicate features. We dressed Susan in a steel-blue ensemble with a crisp, white vest blouse. The contrast of white with dark tones silently speaks with authority. The steel-blue fabric matches her eye color, bringing Susan's "knowing" eyes out from hiding. Classic suede pumps (closed toe and heel) with pewter-toned jewelry complete Susan's professional look. Would you now believe that she is an international authority on art history?

Susan reports that she no longer doubts her own skills. After her makeover, she pursued and won a leadership position on a national

committee, claiming that she is now comfortable asserting herself as the authority figure she truly is.

Dress-Down Basics That Communicate Authority

■ Formal, but Casual

Authority always requires a certain formality, especially when dressed down.

- ◆ Dark colors, often mixed with white or a light hue for a strong contrast.
Black and white is considered the most authoritative combination by color psychology experts. The uniforms or robes of authority figures such as clergymen, judges, nuns, and law enforcement officers are usually solid black or midnight navy, sometimes mixed with white. Business power suits are typically dark worn with a white shirt or blouse. Black-and-white contrast around the face does not suit everyone's natural coloring. In that case, use black with ecru, or stick with monochromatic dark colors. You can also create a strong contrast with other dark tones, like black and red, black/brown, etc.
- ◆ Long sleeves — a must to communicate authority
- ◆ Simple, classic garments
- ◆ Quality fabrics
(Does not mean designer labels)
- ◆ Shoes — high-quality and immaculate
 - Men: All-leather tie shoes are best. Can have a *dressy* slip-on, if polished and in top condition.
 - Women: Closed toes and heels (no higher than 3")
Classic pumps are the most authoritative (does not mean a plain, boring shoe that has no style)
No flats

- **Impeccable Grooming** — See Trust and Power lists

- **Positive Demeanor** — See Trust and Power lists, page XX and XX
 - ◆ Listens well, uses words judiciously, and does not talk incessantly or at inappropriate times. (Do not mistake this attitude for aloofness.)
 - ◆ Revere others' opinions, and respect yourself and your own abilities to command homage from those in positions of authority.

Conveying Credibility:

Credibility is closely linked with trustworthiness, but there is another aspect to its meaning I want to focus on. To succeed in any field, an image that is credible or congruent with what you do is important. This does not mean that you become pigeonholed in a certain position, but you communicate through your image that you are believable for the business you are in.

[Images Omitted]

Figure 3:13

Claudia "Before"
Makeover

Figure 3:14

Claudia "After"
Makeover

Claudia is an interior designer. She was unaware that, consciously and unconsciously, people check out how she dresses to see if they are interested in hiring her to decorate their homes or offices. Her personal taste in clothing and her expertise in putting herself together reflect her abilities as a designer. Claudia often chose denim or wash-and-wear fabrics because she had to handle cumbersome wallpaper books, paint and flooring samples, etc. Her plain, dowdy image (Figure 3:13) conveys no clues that she is a talented designer with an exceptional aptitude for color schemes, textures, and architectural lines. Consequently, she has few opportunities to show her impressive portfolio or to demonstrate her talents. In her personal presentation, Claudia must make the shift from ordinary to extraordinary!

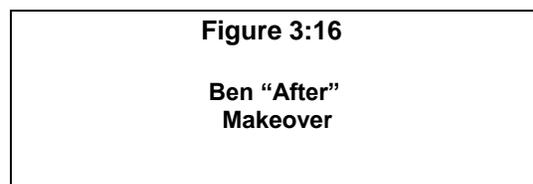
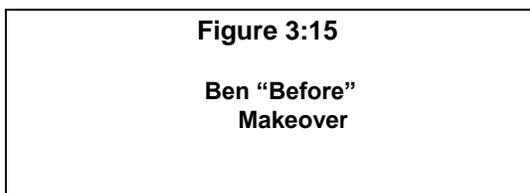
Excerpt from *Casual Power* by Sherry Maysonave, Chapter III.

For credibility, Claudia needs to embody the same sophisticated flair that she can bestow upon a room. To generate interest through her appearance, she should strive to look striking, on a daily basis. Note the example in Figure 3:14. While Claudia's jacket is still a floral, it has rich pizzazz. The silk jacquard fabric with red, olive, and brown highlights adds an exquisite quality to the classic one-button jacket. Olive/brown pants coordinate beautifully with the jacket. The brick-red silk blouse is an unusual choice — and oh, so smashing. The entire ensemble is in superb taste. She has attended to every detail with her jewelry, hosiery, and shoes. Her overall image is now intriguing and demonstrates her extraordinary capabilities as a designer.

Soon after Claudia's makeover, another designer (who was too ill to work) referred her to a doctors group that was redecorating their offices. While going down in the elevator after that appointment — chic bag of fabric samples in hand — two attorneys asked her to take a look at the suite of offices that they were planning to remodel. They were so impressed with her professionalism and her design work that they introduced her to their friend, a well-established architect. Claudia has been exceptionally busy from referral business ever since and is now looking for a second assistant.

Conveying Credibility:

[Images Omitted]



Ben is in sales. He and his wife run their own business. They are affiliated with one of the largest network marketing companies in the world. The company is structured on a multilevel marketing plan. Ben is working on building a profitable downline, but he has only been mildly successful. He claims that a major portion of his business involves networking on the golf course. Ben often wears golf clothing to call on prospective clients. What's more, his choices of golf outfits reveal his poor taste. Ben is color-blind, which also complicates his ability to put together coordinated outfits.

Excerpt from *Casual Power* by Sherry Maysonave, Chapter III.

(Before his makeover, he had no system in his closet to help him identify certain color tones.) When calling on prospects, he has begun to hear comments about how he squeezes in appointments between golf games. People had begun to ask just how long he had been in this business, implying that they question his credibility.

Ben shared with me that he wants to create a relaxed atmosphere to put other people at ease. He thought he was projecting a casual image that said that he did not have to work for someone else. Ben was naive; his overall nonverbal communication actually said that he lacked success, ambition, and professionalism. He was unaware that he was sending the message that he did not take his business seriously. To succeed, Ben must look trustworthy, intelligent, and approachable, but most importantly, he must look like an accomplished winner to get others excited about joining his team.

Ben needed an image that portrayed him as the conscientious, savvy, ambitious guy he is. In Figure 3:16, the dark brown trousers powerfully complement Ben's blond coloring. The rich fabric of his light tan shirt silently says he knows money and its benefits. The micro-check sport coat, in brown/black/beige, adds power and an air of authority to his dressed-down image. Impeccable grooming, high-quality lizard slip-on shoes and belt, and a 14-karat gold watch, (subtle but rich, no flashy diamonds) contribute to the impact of Ben's overall credibility.

Within a few short weeks of his makeover, Ben tripled his downline. One of the couples he enrolled is a real go-getter type. The man is a pediatrician, and his wife is a CPA. They helped take Ben to a greater level of success because they instantly put in place a dynamic down line. Ben shared with me his excitement and told me that he knew that before his makeover, he could not have attracted that particular couple. They would never have listened to what he had to say unless he was projecting that he had something they wanted a piece of. Ben's wife also went through the makeover process, and today as a couple, they are a powerful force helping many others enjoy the benefits of abundance.

Dress-Down Basics That Convey Credibility

■ Know Your Industry

Analyze the details of your business to learn what qualities are most needed to project credibility in your field.

- ◆ Finance — a classic image (in excellent taste)
- ◆ Advertising, art, or beauty industry — flair and glamour (in good taste)
- ◆ Sales — a professional and successful image that inspires trust. Sell yourself! (Regardless of what you do, you have to sell yourself or your ideas, if not a service or product.)

■ Dress-Down on the Dressier Side of Casual

- ◆ A slipshod image only gives you credibility as a slob
- ◆ Read carefully dressing tips from the *Inspiring Trust* list, page XX and the *Exuding Personal Power* list, page XX

■ Impeccable Grooming

- ◆ See *Inspiring Trust* list for Grooming, page XX

■ Positive Demeanor

- ◆ Be authentic, honest, sincere
- ◆ See *Inspiring Trust* list for demeanor, page XX
- ◆ See *Exuding Personal Power* list for demeanor, page XX

Excerpt from *Casual Power* by Sherry Maysonave, Chapter III.

By using these tips, you are more likely to be offered chances to perform, whether or not you are deserving. Nonetheless, after the first impression, the task of proving that you are believable and trustworthy awaits you. The same holds true for exuding personal power and communicating authority.

On the other hand, if you truly possess these qualities but are not dressing that way, you are working too hard and may not be getting the breaks you deserve. Tap the power of your image as a business leverage.

“A man cannot dress, but his ideas get clothed at the same time,” wrote Laurence Sterne in *Tristram Shandy*. Take his words to heart to avoid being a casual casualty when dressing down for business. Remember, you are *always, always* conveying nonverbal messages. Employ the nonverbal realm to work on your team — FOR you, rather than against you. Listen and observe closely the silent language that broadcasts your and others’ real communications.

Life has aspects over which we human beings have no control. That’s even more reason to take charge of what we can. Your image is one thing you control completely — you actually have a monopoly on it.

Right now — today — take control of what you are casually communicating, *before* you speak a word.

End of Excerpt

