

advancing women in business

every
woman

NETWORK



WORKBOOK

IMAGE AND IMPACT

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ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

ESTABLISHED IN 1999, everywoman works to advance all women in business.

Whether you are someone who is starting their career, a new leader, someone in a senior position or an entrepreneur who has started their own business, the way you are perceived and the impact you have on other people will have a significant effect on your success.

We are constantly having an impact on those we meet – just like they are having an impact on us. Sometimes that impact will be positive and powerful, sometimes it can be overbearing, and sometimes it is insignificant or maybe even inappropriate. It can be difficult to judge our own impact on people, because we will always be subjective, and other people will rarely be open about their first impression of us. What's more, someone's first impression of you is coloured by their own view of the world – the way they see things.

There are many things that contribute to the impact we have. For example, physical appearance, clothing, body language, facial expressions and gender.

This workbook is designed to get you to start thinking about how you come across and how to create the kind of impression you want, without changing the authentic you.

For example:

- Our clothes communicate subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) messages about us to everyone we meet
- Our body language contributes more than 50 per cent of the meaning of whatever we say
- Our tone of voice can communicate far more than the words we are saying

Understanding the messages you communicate and learning how to take control of them will enable you to make a positive and lasting impact on other people.

Throughout this workbook, there are exercises to help explain the different elements of making an impact with how you project yourself to others. We have put an action plan at the end of the workbook so that you can list all of your actions in one place.

The everywoman team

“If you don't make an impact when you are there, no one will notice when you are not”

JODI GOLDMAN

SECTION 1. FIRST IMPRESSIONS

People form an opinion of you within seconds
of your first meeting



How do we formulate a first impression?

WHEN TALKING ABOUT image and impact, it is impossible to ignore the importance of the first impression we make.

First impressions are the assumptions that we make when we are first presented with something, and this includes people. We make these assumptions all the time – an impulse that dates back to the days when we had to quickly assess whether those around us were friend or foe. So first impressions are an in-built self-preservation mechanism.

We process information very quickly, rapidly forming a first impression based on the way someone looks, how they are dressed and how they carry themselves. Within seconds of meeting someone, we will make assumptions such as:

- Whether or not they are friendly
- Their personality type
- How wealthy they are
- Whether or not they are trustworthy
- Where they live
- Their education
- Whether they are successful

Most of these assumptions are formed by what psychologists call the 'halo/horn effect'. This is the human tendency to assume a range of characteristics about someone based on just one signal. Some examples of this might be:

- Seeing someone smiling and so assuming that they are friendly, sociable, popular and approachable
- Seeing someone in a smart suit and assuming that they are professional, educated, reliable and wealthy

These assumptions may or may not be true, but, based on one aspect of someone, we often infer other characteristics about them – and this is why first impressions are so important.

Luckily, many of the relationships in our lives are formed over a long period of time, so if our first impressions are wrong, or someone is wrong about us, we have a chance to correct it.

In business, however, we often want people to buy into us quickly. We rarely have the opportunity to overturn a first impression.

The good news is that, once we appreciate the power of the first impression, we can take control of our image and the impact we have.

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression”

How do we formulate a first impression?

Think about your first impressions of people you know, or have known, and fill in the following table.

	My First impression of them was...	I had this impression because...
A MANAGER (CURRENT OR PREVIOUS)		
A COLLEAGUE		
A FRIEND YOU LIKED IMMEDIATELY		
A FRIEND YOU TOOK A WHILE TO WARM TO		
A PARTNER (CURRENT OR PREVIOUS)		
OTHER		
OTHER		
OTHER		
OTHER		

Now we have looked at the first impressions you have had of other people, let's look at how you perceive yourself, how you want others to perceive you, and ways to close the gap between the two.

What happens after we make a first impression?

LET'S IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE introduced to someone and your first impression of them is not very positive. Maybe they don't look friendly, or capable, or reliable. You are told that, from the following day, they will be working very closely with you.

Now, let's fast forward to the next day – their first day of work – and they are 15 minutes late. What would you be thinking right now? In your mind, their lateness has confirmed your suspicions that they are unsuitable for your team.

What happens when we reverse the example? You are introduced to the person and told they will be working with you from the next day. This time, something about them makes you feel confident that they will be fantastic in the role.

The next day, they are 15 minutes late. What would you be thinking?

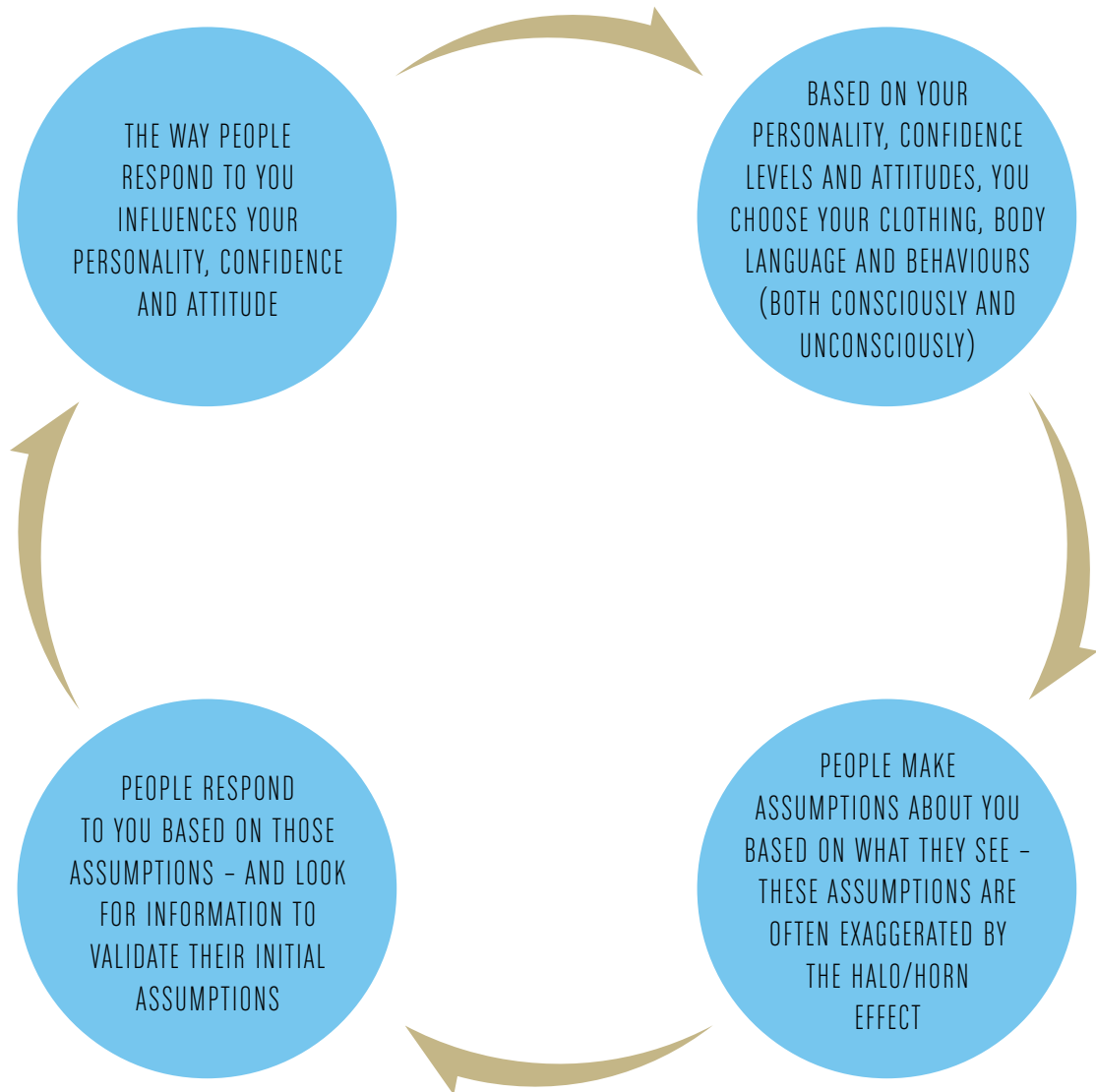
If we are honest about it, in most cases our response would be something along the lines of: 'Something must have happened... they must have a reason for being late.'

This example demonstrates two reasons why the right first impression is so important:

1. First impressions colour our future responses to people. In the example above, this meant being annoyed and thinking 'I knew it' – instead of being willing to give someone the benefit of the doubt.
2. Once we have an impression of someone (or a set of assumptions about them), we tend to look for evidence to re-enforce it. In fact, we might even ignore any future evidence that contradicts our initial impression.


Equally, as we will see in **the first-impression cycle** (page 8), your behaviour directly affects others' first impression of you, which affects how they respond to you. This, in turn, impacts on your response to them and, ultimately, influences your personality, confidence and attitudes. This cycle is based on Betari's Box, which is fully explained in our *Boosting your self-confidence* workbook: everywoman.com/confidence.

The First-impression cycle



As the above diagram indicates, communicating the right things about ourselves through the first impression we make is vitally important, as it sets up a cycle that affects how other people respond to us, and, therefore, how we see ourselves.

SECTION 2. YOUR PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

A photograph of a professional meeting in a modern office. A woman in a white blouse and black skirt stands on the right, gesturing towards a wall of small framed photos. Two other people, a woman and a man, are seated in white office chairs on the left, looking towards the presenter. The room has a bright, clean aesthetic with a white wall and a polished floor.

Step back and think about
what you want your
professional image to be

Your professional image

YOUR PROFESSIONAL IMAGE is created over time: it starts with others' first impression of you and is then built upon with every experience and interaction they have with you.

Essentially, professional image is about what people associate with you: your reputation, what qualities people think you possess, and what people say about you when you are not in the room.

To ensure that you are making a positive first impression, and that your professional image is coming across in the way you want it to, take a step back and think about what your professional image actually is.

Ask yourself

1. WHAT DO YOU WANT PEOPLE TO KNOW YOU FOR?
2. WHAT FIRST IMPRESSION DO YOU WANT TO MAKE?
3. WHERE DO YOU SEE YOUR CAREER GOING?
4. WHO DO YOU SEE YOURSELF NETWORKING WITH FOR YOUR BUSINESS?
5. ARE YOU DOING ALL YOU CAN TO COMMUNICATE THIS IN THE FIRST IMPRESSION YOU MAKE?

This depends upon:

- a) The way you dress
- b) Your body language
- c) Your behaviour



The following exercise is designed to help you think about your professional image: where you want to be, where you think you currently are, and what – if anything – you want to change.

Control people's perceptions about you

EXERCISE

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

For the first question, describe where you are now and how you see yourself. For the second question, think about how you would like other people to see you, but also consider where it is you wish to go in your career or business. This will help you with the third and fourth questions, where you consider the gap between where you are now and where you wish to be.

<p>1. How do you perceive your professional image?</p> <p>For example, 'I am ambitious', 'I am a great communicator', 'I want more responsibility', 'I see myself as my own boss', 'I am a team player', or 'I am serious and see myself as director of the company one day'. Describe exactly how you see your professional image.</p>	
<p>2. How do you want others to perceive you?</p> <p>For example, ambitious, creative, friendly, reliable, decisive. Think about the first impressions you would like other people to have of you.</p>	
<p>3. Thinking about the way you present yourself and your behaviour, how do you think people perceive you? What words would they use?</p> <p>(You might think about any feedback you have received and how people respond to you or talk to you. Think about how you are dressed, how you tend to stand and sit. Try to step outside yourself and be honest about what other people might notice about you.)</p>	

Control people's perceptions about you

4. Why do you think this is?

(If you have a hunch that people might think you come across as underconfident, why do you think that might be? Or, if you suspect that people might think you aren't very organised, why do you think that might be? If you are sure that people see you as friendly and approachable, why do you think that is?)

This can be quite a challenging exercise. But you have probably come up with some things that you can work on straight away.

For example:

- Maybe you are a friendly but quiet person, and this quietness makes you seem aloof
- Maybe you are a hard worker who nevertheless seems unprofessional because you are a bad time-keeper
- Maybe you need to clean out your desk because you get the feeling that people think you are disorganised
- Maybe in your business you network with young, creative types and you want to align yourself more with that image
- Or, maybe you are actually doing a lot of things right! In which case, pat yourself on the back and keep on doing what you are doing!

If you struggled to answer these questions, go and ask someone you trust for some help. Alternatively, speak to an independent image consultant or a mentor. Don't be afraid of objective feedback – it can be pleasantly surprising and will point you in the right direction.

Some questions to ask a mentor

1. What impression did I make when you first met me?
2. How has your impression of me changed, if at all?
3. How would you describe my image?
4. Is there anything about my image that you would recommend I change? Why?

Control people's perceptions about you

EXERCISE

Let's take the First-impressions exercise one step further and explore other elements that can affect the impression colleagues form of us.

Complete the table below about the relevant areas. You can tailor your answers; for instance, if you work on a shop floor and not at a desk, what does the quality of your display say about you?

	What is good?	What could be better?
Your workstation/work area For example, does it look organised? Does everything have a place?		
Telephone manner For example, do you answer the phone with a smile on your face? Do you have an assertive tone?		
Email communication For example, do you have a standard for when you will respond to emails (such as within 24 or 48 hours)? Are you consistent in how you address people in emails and how you sign off? Do you read through your emails before you send them, checking for spelling and grammatical errors?		
Client meetings Do you diarise time to prepare for meetings in advance? Do you have everything to hand when you get to the meeting? Is your bag/briefcase tidy and in good repair?		

Now, take any improvement actions in the right-hand column and your answers to the **previous exercise** (page 11), and commit to an action plan to make small incremental improvements in the areas you have identified. You can do this in your **image and impact action plan at the end of this workbook**.

Communicating your professional image

REFER BACK TO THE EXERCISE on page 11 – particularly the second question, where you wrote down how you want people to perceive you.

You might have some of the following words on your list:

Professional	Dynamic
Confident	Friendly
Capable	Approachable
Credible	Warm
Reliable	Traditional
Creative	Stylish
Innovative	Successful

Now, take each word on your list and ask yourself:

- What does that look like?
- Would different colours communicate this quality?
- How would someone who has this characteristic carry themselves?
- What does their body language look like?
- Do I already do this?
- Could I do this more, or differently?

This process will get you thinking about your image, what you are already doing to convey these messages and what you could do differently.

Communicating your professional image

EXERCISE

YOUR PROFESSIONAL-IMAGE AUDIT

Fill in the table below to complete your professional-image audit.

Image/value I want to project	What this looks like	How I already convey this	How I could convey this more
For example: Sophisticated	Smart, well put together, tailored	I wear suits to work often	I could consistently wear suits in the office and have my hair cut in a neater style
For example: Approachable	Smiling, open body language	I smile a lot when I'm around people and clients, but I sit with my arms crossed and don't say a lot	I am quite shy, so I could make more eye contact with people and stop crossing my arms in meetings

Body language and impact

WHEN IT COMES TO MAKING AN IMPACT, it's not just what you wear that matters, but also how you wear it. Your body language says a great deal about your self-confidence, how approachable you are and what kind of attitude you have. Appearing both confident and approachable are the cornerstones of a professional image.

Look back at your professional-image audit and think about how you want to come across and how you actually come across. Very often, our body language and how we carry ourselves have a big influence on the way we are perceived – although we may not be aware of what we are unconsciously communicating!

For example, you want to be seen as confident, but you don't make eye contact in meetings. You want to be seen as approachable, but you don't initiate conversations because you are more introverted or shy. You might find sitting with your arms folded very comfortable, but is this communicating interest, approachability and confidence to those around you, or might it be perceived as a sign of aloofness, insecurity or disinterest?

Body language is a very big subject. Here, we will just be concentrating on the key elements to coming across as confident yet approachable.



Body language and impact

Use this table to identify which of the following body-language cues you are already using, and which you could use to enhance the impact you have on people.

Body language	Confident and approachable looks like:	Mark out of 5 1=never, 2=a little, 3=sometimes 4=mostly, 5=always	What I will do From now on
Eye contact	Initiating eye contact. Holding eye contact for 70 per cent of the time when talking and listening.		
Posture	Standing upright. Shoulders back, yet relaxed.		
Arms	Open and at your sides when standing. Loosely held on lap or table, still open - not crossed.		
Facial expressions	Smiling genuinely. Showing empathy with what someone else is saying; For example, looking concerned when someone is talking about a problem.		
Physical orientation	Leaning slightly towards the person you are talking to. Turning shoulders and feet towards the person you are talking to.		
Legs	Legs hip-width apart when standing, and not rocking. Not crossed in front of you when standing.		
Hands	No pointing. Gestures are made around the chest area - not around the face or the hips.		
Handshake	Firm, while holding eye contact. Leaning towards the person. Smiling genuinely.		

YOUR IMAGE AND IMPACT ACTION PLAN

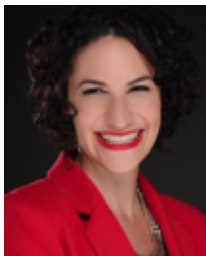
At the beginning of this workbook, we mentioned your image and impact action plan. As you commit to completing the actions throughout the workbook, you can list them here, along with the date that you will complete your action.

	Details	Action/responsibility	Due date
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

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This workbook has been produced and edited by everywoman, with content commissioned from associate expert Jodi Goldman. It is part of the everywoman portfolio of resources that have been specially created to support and develop women as they advance their careers and businesses.

everywoman Expert



Jodie Goldman is an expert in the field of image and impact. She has empowered hundreds of professional women, helping them achieve the success they know they are capable of. Her qualifications include image consulting, communications science, marketing and make-up artistry, which are all combined to create her image and impact courses. She is passionate about helping people to: look fabulous no matter what their body shape or budget; master the art of body language and learn how to communicate with different personality types; and to overcome confidence issues with simple tricks and tools. She has worked with Deutsche Bank, Soho House, Visa, Malmaison & Hotel du Vin, Thorpe Park and countless individuals.

Further reading

- Ann Demarais and Valerie White, *First Impressions: What You Don't Know About How Others See You* (Random House, 2005)
- Victoria A Seitz, *Your Executive Image* (Adams Media Corporation, 1992)
- Gok Wan, *Work Your Wardrobe* (HarperCollins, 2009)
- Mary Spillane, *Branding Yourself* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 2000)

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