Your Image Is Showing

Would you like to know one of the best-kept secrets to success? More than any other factor, your self-image directly affects your success or failure in the business world. The way in which we carry ourselves, comb our hair, walk, talk and conduct our business affairs counts to the other party. It is said that people form an opinion of an individual in two seconds. This is a very quick space of time, and our image is shaped by all our experiences and our thought patterns. This activity gives teens a chance to apply new learning about first impressions and to apply those new findings to people who are interviewing for a job.

Youth Will Learn

Workforce Skills: Building a professional image, marketing, and self-awareness
Success Indicators: Youth will demonstrate ways to build a professional and positive image through evaluating workplace scenarios. You will apply those tips to their own appearance and attitude.

What You Need:

Time Involved: 45-60+ minutes
Suggested Group Size: Any
Materials Needed:
- Magazine cut outs of people in various clothing and styles
- Paper
- Pen
- “Hire Me or Fire Me?” Handout
- Professionalism handouts

Facilitator Tips:

You may want to have a variety of pictures in order to spur more conversation about popular styles and their appropriateness.

Try This Too:

Have representatives from the human resource departments of respected businesses come and talk about what they are looking for in prospective employees. They would probably also be able to share some fun exercises with the teens.
The Activity

1. Talk to the teens about how showing that you are a respectable person requires cleanliness, maturity, sophistication, and confidence. Confidence is not everything however. Showing up to an interview with pink hair and a hickey on your neck will get you no where, no matter how confident you are. Self-image is just as much as care for the body as it is for appreciation and projection of the body (and mind of course).

2. Explain that self-image is essential in any line of work. Have them consider the following scenario:

   A woman walks into a grocery store and heads to the customer service counter to exchange an item. As she walks to the counter, she sees two salespeople. The first salesperson looks as though they just rolled out of bed, have not showered in a few days, and they are slouching as they stand behind the counter. She stands looking bored and does not bother to greet the customer. The salesperson also did not care to remove the streak of eye-liner that is running down her face. The second salesperson appears to be confident woman that strolls over with a smile on her face and asks the woman if she needs help with anything. She is a clean woman and smells nice as well. She carries herself as though she is gliding across the floor and as though she enjoys what she is doing.

3. Ask the teens which salesperson they would purchase from and why? What were the qualities of the first salesperson? What were the qualities of the second salesperson?

   Talk to the teens about how incredibly important image is in the business world. Organizations have their own business, their own organizational culture, and above all else their own style of conducting business. It is the people and employees who make up the image of any organization. To succeed in business, you have to look capable and trustworthy to others. You will have to be very reliable, and show that you can get the job done. This will be passed on by word of mouth to others.

   The same goes for any line of work; employers are more attracted to people that look happy and successful. They do not want to think that the person they are hiring is just looking for a pay check, employers want to imagine that their employees enjoy what they are doing and are happy.

   The way you see yourself in your mind’s eye is the way others will see you. Confidence in your abilities is key. A warm, genuine smile and care in presentation will set the example and show others that you are a person who is respectful, enjoys a challenge and values there own morals and standards.

4. Have teen make a list of characteristics that make the person someone they would hire, and a list of things that make the person someone they would not hire.

5. After they finish their worksheet, have them gather into groups of 3 or 4 and talk over their decisions and suggestions. As a group they should write their top ten tips for their group of people. The tips should be general enough to help anyone who is trying to dress and look more professional.
Talk It Over

Share
• Have you ever encountered either of the salespeople in your everyday life?
• What qualities do you find most important for your self image?
• What qualities do you find most important for the image you project?

Process
• What was difficult about pointing out characteristics?
• What things were easier to identify?

Generalize
• Have you ever been embarrassed by how you look in a situation?
• How do you act at school, meetings, 4-H camp, or work? Do they differ?

Apply
• What can you do to help yourself appear more confident?
• How would you use this information in a job interview?
• How would you use this information at work, school, or at camp?

People are constantly observing your behavior and forming theories about your competence, character, and commitment, which are rapidly disseminated throughout your workplace.
Hire Me or Fire Me?

Positive Characteristics

Negative Characteristics

What changes would you have him/her make in order to have a more positive first impression?
People see you as a projection of how you see yourself. If you aspire to be successful in business, is not it important to be the type of person who projects a confident, positive self-image? This kind of confidence is earned, not given, so let us explore the importance of self-image in the business world.

Great First Impressions
Before you even speak a word, people size you up based on your appearance and decide what kind of person you are. It may seem unfair, but it is a harsh reality. The good news is you can address it and make it work in your favor.

Part of self-image involves appearance, and you have a surprising amount of control over how you look. Good posture, a flattering, stylish haircut, manicure, a healthy smile, and well-tailored apparel speak volumes about you before you utter that first "Hello."

More importantly, if you like what you see in the mirror, you will project an air of confidence, poise, and competence. People will believe in your abilities because you appear capable, and this in turn enhances your self-image.

Do not underestimate the power of first impressions and physical appearances.

Positive Thoughts and Actions
Another component of self-image has to do with desires, thoughts, and actions. Desires lead to thoughts, and thoughts influence actions. The best way to ensure productive actions is to think productive thoughts. If your desire is to be successful and your thought is "I want to climb to the top of the corporate ladder as quickly as possible," you may trample all over anyone who stands in your way in an effort to achieve your goals. Bear in mind that actions have consequences. The person you trample today is not likely to help and support you tomorrow.

Therefore, thoughts that flow from the desire to be successful by making a positive contribution usually reap the best results. Your thought might be, "What is the best way to advance my career while helping my company achieve its goals?" The action you take might be something as proactive as taking the initiative on a project, or as simple as refraining from office gossip.

Every positive thought produces positive actions that have favorable results not only for you, but also for those around you. The more you practice this line of thinking, the more it becomes second nature. The benefit to your company or organization ultimately benefits you.

Hard Work and Integrity
Be ready for opportunities when they come. Every day that you show up and put forth your best effort puts you in the best position to seize opportunities when they come your way. Always seek to improve yourself. It keeps you and life in general, interesting.

Success depends on no one but you. When you stumble, and on occasion you will, learn all you can from that experience to avoid making the same mistake in the future. Do not spend too much time looking backwards, though. Everyone makes mistakes. Put it in perspective and move forward.
Professionalism is kind of a vague concept, but basically, it is the art of behaving in the workplace in a manner that is dependable and pleasant. These are skills you can work on by getting an internship and other work experience, but what many teens do not realize is that professionalism skills can be developed in the classroom, in school groups, sports, at home, and everywhere!

Being a reliable student is very similar to being a reliable employee. Students can practice professionalism by:

• Turning in work on time
• Turning in quality work
• Interacting politely with professors and other students
• Interacting productively in class discussions and group projects
• Paying attention in class (no texting)
• Not missing class unless they have a good reason and coming to class on time
• Not making excuses and taking responsibility for poor work or missed deadlines
• Not doing as little as possible to get a decent grade
• Not complaining that the work is too hard or too much