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HELP YOUR CANDIDATES LOOK THEIR BEST

By Elena Reed, style & image consultant www.evolutzia.com.au

Don't let a candidate with image problems miss out on their dream job - use these tips from image and business etiquette specialist Elena Reed to address this sensitive area.

Reed, whose company Evolutzia provides advice on personal image, says that when your candidate has the appropriate skill set but needs fine tuning in other areas - for example, ill-fitting, unkempt clothing or other personal hygiene issues - it is in your professional interest to have things "tweaked" before they meet with your client.

"Giving feedback, particularly to the opposite gender, can be tricky," she acknowledges. "The process needs to happen in a sensitive manner, preferably without making the candidate feel uncomfortable."

Reed outlines five simple steps, using Mark Horstman's 'feedback sandwich' technique, which will assist you to give sensitive feedback every time it's needed.



Step One: Ask for permission

Say: "May I give you some feedback?"

Don't say: "I need to tell you something"

Step Two: Comment on the *choice* they made and not the issue

Say: "When you choose to... wear a shorter skirt/style your hair traditionally/ relax your grooming (as in oral hygiene) ..."

Don't say: "Your skirt is too short", "Your hair is dated", or "You have bad breath".

Step Three: Describe the negative consequences ('what happens is...')

Say: "When you choose to wear a shorter skirt, *what happens is* you make a personal statement rather than professional."

"When you choose to style your hair traditionally, *what happens is* others may wrongly judge you as dated." "When you choose to relax your grooming, as in

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oral hygiene, *what happens is* interviewers may get the wrong impression of you."

Don't say: "Your skirt is too short. It makes you look cheap."

"Your hair is dated. It makes you look old."

"You have bad breath. It's hard to be around you."

Step Four: Call to action

Say: "Will you be able to do something about it?". (Then, pause and listen.)

Don't say: "Can you change your skirt/have a haircut/see a dentist?"

Step Five: Offer some tips, if appropriate

Say: "By the way, here is a 'dress for success' checklist that has helped many of our candidates and I hope it may be of value to you too." Leave it with them and change the subject.

Don't say: "I guarantee if you see a dentist/cut your hair/change your skirt..."

Reed provides the following example of how a consultant could sensitively give feedback to a candidate.

Consultant: May I give you some feedback?

Candidate: That's fine.

Consultant: When you choose to relax your grooming, as in oral hygiene, what happens is others may get the wrong impression of you. Will you be able to do something about it?

Candidate: Really? I brushed my teeth this morning!

Consultant: That's a great start. By the way, here is the 'candidate success checklist' that has helped many of our candidates and I hope it may be of value to you too.

Nine out of ten times, Reed says, your candidate will "get it" and change their inappropriate behaviour.

She says: "It's in everyone's best interests to be open yet gracious when offering feedback, to help them put their best foot forward."

Reed has produced '**dress for success**' checklists for women and for men that recruiters can download from www.evolutzia.com.au.