



Work Your Image: The Importance of Appearance on the Job

Prepared For:
Work Your Image!
A Project of
The Cosmetic, Toiletry, and Fragrance Association
and
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment

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Background and Methodology

Yankelovich Partners conducted an omnibus study on behalf of the Cosmetic, Toiletry, and Fragrance Association and Women Work!. A regionally representative sample of 1,000 Americans age 18 or older were interviewed by telephone using an unrestricted Random Digit Dialing (RDD) technique that significantly reduces serial bias and ensures that respondents with both listed and unlisted numbers are reached. Only one interview was conducted per household.

Interviews were conducted between April 19 and April 22, 2001.

To ensure a reliable and accurate representation of the total national adult population, completed interviews were weighted to known proportions for age, gender, geographic region, and race. The margin of error for the total sample is $\pm 3.1\%$.

Key Findings

- **Most Americans believe clothing, hair, and makeup are important for a woman to make a good appearance on the job.** Nearly seven in ten (69%) Americans believe clothing, hair and makeup are very or extremely important for a woman to make a good appearance on the job. One in five (21%) believes it is somewhat important, and seven percent believe it is not very or not at all important.
- **Americans believe a woman's appearance at work affects certain aspects of her future performance on the job.** Eighty-four percent of Americans believe a woman's appearance affects whether she is asked to represent her company at outside meetings, and three in four believe it affects whether she is taken seriously (76%), asked to participate in meetings with upper management (74%), or is well regarded by colleagues and supervisors (74%). Two thirds believe a woman will be given new challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities (67%), or considered for a raise or promotion (64%).
- **Americans believe a woman's appearance affects her confidence in her ability to perform her job.** Nearly half (46%) of Americans believe clothes, hair and makeup affects a woman's confidence in her ability to perform her job well, followed by one-third (32%) who believes it is somewhat true. One in six (18%) does not believe these factors affect a woman's confidence in her ability to perform her job well.
- **Americans believe that a woman's appearance at work affects her ability to perform her job well.** More than half (59%) of Americans believe appearance is a factor, while 36% believe appearance is not a factor. Five percent of Americans are not sure of any if the statements are true.
- **The majority of Americans are certain they dressed appropriately on their most recent first day on a job.** Nearly four out of five (78%) Americans are very or extremely certain they dressed appropriately for their most recent first day on a job, ten percent are somewhat certain, and only four percent are not very or not at all certain about how they dressed for their first day on a job. Six percent are not sure, and two percent have never had a job.

- **Neat hairstyles and light makeup are definite “DO’s” for a woman’s appearance on the job.** Nine in ten (91%) Americans agree a clean and neat hairstyle is important, followed by four in five (82%) who believe light makeup is a “DO” for a woman’s appearance on the job. Three in four agree on short or average length nails with clear or light polish (77%), skirt at knee length or longer (77%), and modest jewelry (75%) are important. Two-thirds believe low heels (68%) or a suit in navy, black or tan (65%) are definite “DO’s.” Two in five believe matching shoes and purse (46%) and a bright scarf or blouse for color (39%) are important for a woman’s appearance on the job.
- **Casual clothing and heavy makeup top the list as definite “DON’Ts” for a woman’s first day on the job.** Four in ten Americans believe casual clothing (81%) and heavy makeup (80%) are not acceptable for a woman’s first day on the job, followed by three in four who cite large clunky jewelry (77%) or a short or tight skirt (76%). Other unacceptable “DON’Ts” for a woman’s first day on the job include an unconventional hair style (71%), bright or glitter nail polish (68%), or sneakers (67%). Nearly one in ten (9%) Americans are not sure what is included as definite “DON’Ts” for a woman’s first day on the job.
- **The majority of Americans do not believe it takes a lot of money for a woman to make a good impression at work.** Two-thirds (65%) of Americans do not believe it takes a lot of money for a woman to have the kind of clothes, hair and makeup to make a good impression at work, and three in ten (31%) believes it does take a lot of money.

Topline Questionnaire

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The Cosmetic, Toiletry, and Fragrance Association
Women Work! The National Network for Women's Employment

Omnibus Questions

4/19/01

1. In your opinion, how important are clothing, hair and makeup for a woman to make a good appearance on the job? Are they. . . .(READ LIST. ENTER ONE RESPONSE.)

Extremely important	25%
Very important	44%
Somewhat important	21%
Not very important	4%
Not at all important	3%
Don't know/not sure (DO NOT READ)	3%

2. Thinking back to your most recent first day on a job, how certain did you feel that you dressed appropriately for that job? Were you(READ LIST. ENTER ONE RESPONSE.)

Extremely certain	44%
Very certain	34%
Somewhat certain	10%
Not very certain	2%
Not at all certain	2%
Have never had a first day at a job	2%
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	6%

3. If you are giving advice to a woman on her appearance for her first day on a job, which of the following are DEFINITE “DO’s?” (READ LIST. RANDOMIZE. MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED.)

Clean and neat hairstyle	91%
Light makeup	82%
Short or average length nails with clear or light polish	77%
Skirt at around knee length, or long	77%
Modest jewelry	75%
Low heels	68%
Suit or matching pants and jacket in navy, black or tan	65%
Matching shoes and purse	46%
Bright scarf or blouse for added color	39%
Other (Specify)	1%
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	4%

4. And, which of the following are DEFINITE “DON’Ts?” (READ LIST. RANDOMIZE. MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED.)

Casual clothing, such as shorts, worn- out clothes or bare midriffs	81%
Heavy makeup	80%
Large clunky jewelry	77%
Short or tight skirt	76%
Unconventional hair style or hair color	76%
Bright or glittered nail polish	68%
Sneakers	67%
Other (Specify)	1%
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	9%

5. In your opinion, do clothes, hair and makeup affect a woman’s confidence in her ability to perform her job well? Would you say. . . (READ LIST. ENTER ONE RESPONSE)

A great deal	24%
Very much	22%
Somewhat	32%
Not very much	8%
Not at all	10%
Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ)	4%

6. Which of the following BEST describes what you think about a woman's appearance at work and her confidence in her ability to perform her job well? (READ LIST. RANDOMIZE. ENTER ONE RESPONSE.)

Feeling that she makes a good appearance is essential for women when it comes to being able to do their job well - she has to think about how she presents herself as part of being able to do a good job 25%

Making a good appearance is a factor, but not essential for a woman. A woman should do her best, but should not think that she can't do a good job unless she puts a lot of time and effort into her appearance 34%

How she looks at a job has nothing to do with whether or not she can do the job well. It's all about her skills and ability, not about how she looks 36%

Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ) 5%

7. Do you think that a woman's appearance at her job is likely to affect whether she is (READ LIST. RANDOMIZE. MULTIPLE RESPONSES ALLOWED.)

Asked to represent her company at outside meetings 84%
 Taken seriously 76%
 Asked to participate in meetings with upper management 74%
 Well regarded by colleagues and supervisors 74%
 Given new challenges, responsibilities and opportunities 67%
 Considered for a raise or promotion 64%
 Other (Specify) 0%
 None of the above (DO NOT READ) 4%
 Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ) 3%

8. Do you think it takes a lot of money for a woman to have the kind of clothes, hair and makeup that make a good impression at work, or not?

Yes 31%
 No 65%
 Don't know/Not sure (DO NOT READ) 4%