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# Interviewing 101: Attitude and image toolkit

**"P**reparation + Attitude + Opportunity + Action = Luck"  
— John C. Maxwell

*"Excellence is not a skill, it is an attitude."* — Ralph Marston

*"You can't always have a good day. But you can always face a bad day with a good attitude."* — Unknown

*"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it."* — Lou Holtz

*"A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst and it sparks extraordinary results."* — Wade Boggs

At this point, I'm sure you get my point. As Charles R. Swindoll tells us, "The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life."

How's your attitude? Is it positive or negative most of the time? Remember, it's your focus that counts. The optimist sees a glass that's half full. The pessimist sees one that's half empty. Comedian George Carlin said that he sees a glass that's twice the size it needs to be. In other words, your attitude is a reflection of how you look at things, and it's always your choice. Before, during and after your interview, think positive, think professional and think success.

Centuries ago, Shakespeare wrote, ". . . the apparel oft proclaims the man." Here we are centuries later, and according to some psychologists, it takes approximately 5-10 seconds for a person to create an impression. Whether positive or negative, during

that flash of time, the important point to remember is that you never get a second chance to make a first impression. And those critical first impressions are lasting ones.

An old saying in human resource circles is that the hiring decision is often made in the first 30 seconds of the interview, and the balance of the time is used to justify that decision. Consider it your 30-second hurdle.

You may be knowledgeable, skilled, determined and committed, but if your attitude and image are confusing, an employer may take a quick look and listen and then move on to another candidate who appears more suited to fulfill the workplace needs. So, like a product that is rejected and passed over, you would not get a second chance to make a good first impression with that employer.

Many job searchers assume that talent and experience are the only tools necessary for achieving interview success. They discount positive attitude and image as potential assets. Yet, they can be keys to complementing your overall background, giving you a genuine competitive edge and "stamping" you as a professional and ideal fit for a position. Positive attitude and image are the most visible and easily acquired tools you can add to your interviewing toolkit.

Now, I realize that many of you may feel a bit uncomfortable with the term "image." You say those days are gone forever. You feel that if you are going to be judged, you would much prefer to be judged on your knowledge, skills and ability. Once again,

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the reality is that we are initially judged by the impression we create. In today's competitive global work environment, every message we send needs to be positive.

So, beginning with the obvious, pay attention to your appearance. Your wardrobe is something over which you have total control. While there is no magic outfit designed for instant hiring success, you should keep in mind that it is always better to err on the conservative side when dressing for an interview.

Your goal is to create a strong, positive first impression. Also consider that what is appropriate is determined by the profession, industry and position for which you are interviewing.

The way you present yourself is the single most powerful nonverbal statement you can make. Even if you personally believe that too much emphasis is placed on image, it's human nature for an employer to be more favorably inclined toward the well-qualified job candidate who also looks the part.

In the final analysis, consider your positive attitude and image as a form of communication. With it, you want to send messages that will bring forth positive responses. In today's fiercely competitive business world, those messages can make the difference between "you're hired" and "we're not interested."

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