

# How Women Executives Can Go from Good to Great When Presenting

By Judith Filek—President  
Impact Communications, Inc.

The time is right for women to move into senior management positions. In fact, today, more than ever before, most major corporations are actively searching for women with proven leadership skills. One of the earmarks of a strong leader is the ability to communicate. The surest way for women to enhance their chances of moving up the corporate ladder is to strengthen their communication skills. Perfecting the following issues will help to make a positive impression.

**Dress and Appearance:** First impressions are lasting. In fact, the National Retailer's Association says it takes six more perfect times to erase a bad first impression. Dressing for success is very important, especially when making an important presentation. Image consultants are readily available at most major department stores to assist in this all important area.

While being in style is important, some outfits may be questionable in a work environment and more appropriate for a social setting. Anything too short or too tight should be avoided at all costs. Dark colored separates or pant suits, accentuated with a scarf, pin or crisp blouse, almost always work.

Most women do not have perfect bodies, but yet, image consultants say, many people choose clothing that is not flattering to their body type. Knowing and understanding one's body type is essential to eliminating mistakes. Image consultants also caution women who have gained weight not to squeeze into their old clothes since it draws attention to problem areas.

**Clear, Compelling Messages:** Although image is important, women must be able to express themselves in a strong manner to be taken seriously. Women who are successful communicators are very clear and concise. They do not bury their thoughts in long winded diatribes. They aren't afraid to address the tough issues head on.

Additionally, excellent women communicators are known for doing their homework and for gearing their message to their listeners. They actively seek involvement and invite people to share their opinions. They anticipate the tough questions and are prepared to answer in a non-defensive manner. As a result, listeners feel engaged and confident that the speaker knows her stuff.

**Strong Body Language:** Obviously, the message is important, but so is the way it is delivered. It is critical for a woman to be perceived as composed and confident. The first way a woman signals she is confident is through her *posture*. She needs to stand up straight or sit up straight. She should not be shifting from one foot to another or slouching in her chair. She needs to *look people in the eye* when making her points. She should not be reading from notes or slides or darting too quickly from person to person. A good rule of thumb is to finish the sentence or thought with one person at a time.

A woman should use her *hands and face* to convey her points. *Smiling* will relax the audience and show confidence. Through her *gestures*, she should paint a picture for her listeners of what is important to remember or understand. She should avoid fidgeting with rings, clothing or hair. Any overdone or closed gestures can distract the listeners from a well crafted message.

Finally, a woman's voice is her calling card. Through her voice, she should sound friendly, sincere and confident, not young or uncertain. A woman who speaks with a lot of filler words or has a whiny voice will seem unprepared and tentative. Pausing and breathing at appropriate spots can greatly enhance a woman's credibility.

Key skills for any woman then are dress and appearance, strong body language and clear, concise messages. Women who desire improvement in these areas should consider working with a coach, taking a class or reading more about these issues.

*Continued on page 2*

*Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our website, [www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com](http://www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com).*