Personal marketing and communications

Although we think of marketing communications as mostly printed and electronic promotional pieces, there is one part of the communication process that is completely personal—you. Most of us represent our companies or even ourselves, if we are looking for a job or a project. We may have nice business cards but what else are we doing to market ourselves? Yesterday, I attended a networking/educational event where I saw Kate Perrin, a fabulous networker and business person. We discussed (among other things like the Daschle debacle) how people present themselves. This area, which I consider personal marketing, is rarely addressed but it is crucial nonetheless.

Why is your personal presentation a part of marketing? Simply, because *all marketing is about perception*, and how we look (how we are dressed, our body language, our demeanor in general) determines the perception others have of us. If I show up to an interview in sloppy clothes, doesn't it seem that I didn't put any effort in and that I really don't care what people think? Similarly, if I go to a business event where everyone is wearing "business attire" and I am wearing flip-flops and shorts, don't I look out of place? Creative people generally dress creatively and corporate people also tend to dress in corporate attire. There is a reason for this—they are branding themselves. This extends to business cards as well. A lawyer probably will hand you a linen embossed card and a designer might give you a colorful one.

A few months ago, I attended a networking event. The woman in charge was a business owner, and had a direct marketing firm. She talked about email campaigns and such. However, I was distracted from her message because she was dressed in a suit circa 1985, and had unstyled long hair. She was clearly stuck

in an earlier era, so my impression of her was that in no way could she conduct a 21st Century direct marketing campaign.

Of course not everyone should be cookie-cutter, dressed in navy blue suit and showing no hint of personal style. But there are some generalities about personal marketing:

- Clothing style reflects your brand—what do you want your brand to be?
- Sloppiness never looks professional
- Business cards are part of your personal marketing package
- Your handshake speaks volumes about you
- A smile goes a long way