

# Making an impression

Looks do count when you're interviewing for a job. We provided makeovers for two 50-somethings who wanted to appear more up-to-date as they search for work.

See more photos and get more job-seeking advice at [twincities.com/watchdog](http://twincities.com/watchdog)



Kae Kozlowski shapes Patricia O'Neill's eyebrows at Estetica Salon and Spa.



O'Neill gets a look at her new haircut and hair color that was done by Kelly Cramer.



Image consultant Linda Froiland, right, adjusts a scarf for O'Neill.

## >> advice from the experts

### CAROL BRUESS

The way you look to a prospective employer during those crucial first minutes can make or break your job interview.

That may sound shallow, but it's true, experts say. If you're an older job seeker, you should be especially aware of counteracting a possible bias against older job applicants by appearing up-to-date and energetic. If you're older but look updated, hiring managers may assume that

your job skills likewise are up-to-date and that you can work well with younger generations.

"I don't think any of us should underestimate the importance of a first impression," said Carol Bruess, a social scientist who teaches interpersonal communications at the University of St. Thomas. "We take in most of our information about people ... from the nonverbal cues, including the way our voice sounds, the hat we have on ...

the suit we've chosen, the way our hair is cut, how much makeup (we wear)."

With so many applicants for each job, employers are looking for ways to make a quick decision on who is the best fit. If your resume was impressive enough to get you an interview, your main concern should be how you come across as a person.

"Some estimates are that between 75 and 90 percent of all information in any interaction is nonverbal, not

what we say or write," Bruess said. "It's the haircut, the hairstyle ... the way you sit, the way you gesture. We can rest assured that people are evaluating and perceiving us based on all those cues, especially in an interview situation. The burden is on the one who is making the impression, especially in this job market."

Job seekers of any age should be very careful of how they present themselves at an interview, Bruess said,

because employers, who don't have time to get to know you fully, are investing great importance in surface cues.

"The wise interviewee is considering all of the possible perceptions," she said. One way to do that is to ask a variety of people you know to be brutally honest about how you look, what you're like in a conversation, any annoying mannerisms — even your posture.

"It's the whole package," Bruess said.

### LINDA FROILAND

On the wall of image consultant Linda Froiland's St. Paul office is a quote by artist Andy Warhol:

"It's not what you are that counts; it's what they think you are."

So for that all-important job interview, you want to dress in a way that doesn't give any wrong impressions. You want to come across as detail-oriented and aware of what's going on in the world.

Froiland says no matter what you wear, it should be clean, pressed,

well-fitting, in good repair and up-to-date. Shoes should be shined; purses and briefcases should be in good shape. A hiring manager will assume a person who dresses carefully cares about getting the job and, once hired, will take similar care doing the job.

Research how people in the position you're applying for dress at the company you're interested in. Look at the Web site for photographs of employees on the job; call the administrative assistant in the department and

ask; consult with friends with similar jobs.

Not everyone needs to wear a business suit to an interview — it depends on the job. Someone applying for work with a landscaping contractor, for example, might be better off with a less formal look, such as a sport coat and tie.

Your outfit should reflect the feel of the position. For example, someone applying for a job at an adult assisted living facility should look warm and welcoming, rather than severely

business-like — "like someone who, if I went in there, I could trust to leave my mom and dad with."

Your outfit should have some spark to it that reflects your personality. That could be a colorful blouse with a classic suit or an interesting piece of jewelry. If you're older, make sure to dress in up-to-date clothes. Don't raid your daughter's closet, but find something age-appropriate in current styles. "You have to look like you've been paying attention to the times."

A modern look is especially important for companies that deal with young clients or sell a trendy product. "They want some pretty hip-looking people walking through that door." That includes a contemporary haircut and color.

Eyeglasses should be in an up-to-date style, such as those made of plastic in a flattering color. Wearing black is a bad idea, as it looks harsh on most people. Find something in gray, brown, navy blue or khaki that's flattering to your skin tones.

Beware of plunging necklines, tight clothes, bare legs, heavy perfume, underwire lines and big designer labels.

Get any new hairstyle or outfit a week ahead of time, so you have a chance to get used to it.

Dress up even for phone interviews — your demeanor will be more professional. And finally ... women, go out and buy some sexy underthings to wear under your interview attire. "You'll walk with a new attitude," Froiland says.



By Debra O'Connor  
[watchdog@pioneerpress.com](mailto:watchdog@pioneerpress.com)

Searching for a job is tough enough, but doing so with an outdated look puts you at a disadvantage.

As part of the Watchdog: Your Next Job series, the Watchdog previously wrote about the issue of age discrimination in hiring and invited older job seekers to apply for an image makeover. St. Paul image consultant Linda Froiland volunteered to help two 50-somethings modernize their looks. Her goal, she said, was not to try to make baby boomers look like Gen Yers, but to create sharp, modern looks that also are age-appropriate.

Brian Gronquist and Patricia O'Neill were selected from nearly two dozen applicants. Both agreed to follow Froiland's recommendations and to be photographed and interviewed throughout the process.

Since the impact is in many subtle details, it was a long process. After a friendly smile and a warm handshake, Froiland took a critical look at her two subjects, who came to the meeting as if arriving at a real job interview.

To the "before" photo session, Patricia O'Neill wore a black suit — a very common job interview choice but a big no-no for virtually everyone, Froiland said. "It's too stern, it's not welcoming, it's unapproachable."

Instead, Froiland, who as part of her work is a personal shopper, selected a soft gray suit (marked down from \$200 to \$90 at Macy's) and paired it with a coral shell (\$20 at Macy's) for a pop of color. To complete the look, Froiland dressed O'Neill in oxblood low heels (marked down from \$99 to \$70 at Herberger's) and accessorized her with a simple leather purse (marked down from \$120 to \$60 at Herberger's). Hot deals are available if job seekers scout sales and use coupons. The look was completed with scaled-back jewelry: a string of pearls, hoop earrings, a ring on each hand.

To vary the look of the suit, Froiland recommended a trendy scarf; to give another look to the outfit, she removed the suit jacket and added a cardigan to match the shell.

At the Estetica Salon and Spa, O'Neill received five hours of services. Her acrylic nails were remade in a simple but elegant French manicure, with a pinkish polish at the base and just the tips of the nails whitened.

After a long consultation with stylist Kelly Cramer, O'Neill agreed to a

layered and softened haircut and a warm-tone color treatment. The change was subtle enough so that she felt comfortable with it, and relatively uncomplicated, so she could repeat the hairstyle at home on her own.

After some eyebrow shaping and makeup, she was allowed to peek in the mirror. Her reaction was at first surprise, followed by a satisfied smile.

For Gronquist's initial meeting, he wore a white shirt and tie with dress slacks. But for a management position, Froiland thought a more professional look was in order. She contacted Heimie's Haberdashery in downtown St. Paul and conferred with store manager Vincent Jenny. They settled on a \$545 classic navy blue suit with a \$75 solid blue shirt, which Froiland noted went better with Gronquist's skin tone. They paired that with a \$55 blue tie. In terms of ties, Jenny said, red is power and yellow is happy, but blue is calm, which may be the image a job seeker wants to project. Plus, Froiland added, the color brings out Gronquist's blue eyes and again complements his skin tone. For a bit of visual interest, Jenny also tucked a \$25 patterned pocket square into the suit coat.

Jenny, who advises always wearing a suit to an interview for a management or "serious" job, considers this an ideal ensemble for a first interview: Traditional, low-key, well-fitting, businesslike. The interviewer will automatically acknowledge the suitability of the ensemble and then forget about it, rather than become distracted by puzzling over the job seeker's clothes, he said.

"You want them listening to what you're saying, not looking at what you're wearing," he said.

For a second interview, Jenny said, an applicant may consider a mid-tone gray suit with a gold tie.

Clothes may make the man, but there's more to it than that: Gronquist, too, spent the day receiving services at Estetica, starting with his first manicure. Hands and nails are important, Froiland explained, because they are in evidence at a job interview: Handshakes, handing documents to the interviewer, gesturing. Gronquist didn't get polish — although some guys do — but his nails were buffed to a soft matte finish. Estetica manicurist Nicole Johnson said about 10 percent of her customers are men.

Froiland consulted with the salon staff about the best hair color and cut for Gronquist. With older people, there can be some special challenges. As Amy Carlson inspected his hair, the balding Gronquist said ruefully, "I have a void on the top of my head."

They chose a short, snappy haircut and a sandy brown color with a reddish touch for him. Lighter shades are often better for people whose hair has "silvered out," Carlson said, to help minimize the effect when the hair grows out. Gronquist's eyebrows were colored, also.

"It's about finding their best attribute" — in this case, his blue eyes — "and making it pop," Carlson said. But then came the big surprise: The stylist recommended tinting his eyelashes.

A bit over the top? Oh well, Gronquist said, already "my friends can't wait to tease me."



Estetica stylist Amy Carlson adds a new hairstyle to Brian Gronquist's new hair color.



Gronquist takes a first look at his new hairstyle after Amy Carlson finishes the color and cut. "Oh ho! It is different!" he said.



After looking at hundreds of ties with image consultant Linda Froiland, owner Anthony Andler at Heimie's Haberdashery in St. Paul puts the final selection on Gronquist.

Photos by  
Ginger Pinson  
Pioneer  
Press