

Case Study 1

The senior vice president of a mid-sized company saw the need to create a change in the workforce, which had enjoyed an extremely casual dress code and equally casual behavioral standards for years. The time had come to step up the company's image as it was growing into new areas and seeing an influx of new clients and investors.

A six-month educational project was developed. Employees were first provided training to introduce the importance of professionalism in every aspect of the work environment. A company blog was created to which employees could post anonymously and vent frustrations and encouragement at the changes taking place. Small company focus groups were created to disseminate the plans for increased professional image and gain ideas for the best handling of plans.

Image consulting began with instruction in inexpensive options for acquiring the proper workplace wardrobe. Those who desired it were provided with personal consulting sessions. Many employees took the opportunity to "turn over a new leaf" and become skilled "impression managers."

"Mystery guest" clients were engaged to meet with various departments, teams, and employees and provide their impressions of the workforce. Evaluations of the visits were posted on the company blog and discussed in company-wide meetings and in focus groups. These evaluations included the impressions the mystery clients had of the behavior of those with whom they met and the general feelings they perceived. These eye-opening evaluations gave staff a new view of why professional image and behavior are important.

The end of the project saw a dramatic improvement in the company's workforce. Employees were more engaged, some even expressing excitement at being a member of a workforce that cared about promoting the best in professional image. Managers were more discriminating in the hiring process and felt more confident of their hiring decisions. Counseling employees yielded more productive outcomes.

Case Study 2

A supervisory laboratory was created for a large (500+ employees) company that recognized many new managers were struggling with the role and duties of a supervisor. Materials were developed in cooperation with the HR department and instruction ran once a week for ten weeks.

Results were significant: several new managers approached HR with a concern they might not be ready for a manager's position, allowing HR to offer individual coaching and, in one case, reassignment (thus preventing the loss of a good employee). Overall, the managers expressed greater confidence in their positions and shared a resulting camaraderie that gave the project an unexpected, but extremely welcome, conclusion. The HR department was delighted to have a program that was successful, had great through-the-grapevine recommendations, and could be implemented as an employee development feature.

Case Study 3

The president of a small office equipment sales company arranged for personal coaching for the sales manager, who had been a salesperson for years but wanted to make a go of managing the sales force. The president had concerns about the man's ability to handle the job, but wanted to afford him every opportunity to succeed. He felt coaching would reveal the strengths and weaknesses that could either be addressed or would be a clear indication of a poor fit for the job.

Weekly coaching was arranged for the new manager. His personality and management style were probed, and his approaches to various challenges on the job were explored. Because he was not a good reader, Sue recorded an appropriate book for him to digest and its principles were discussed.

As coaching progressed, the general nature of the sessions were discussed with the president and Sue provided ideas and thoughts on the possible directions that could be taken. In the end, the president terminated the manager, confident that he had provided what was needed for success. He told Sue, "I feel good that I did everything I could and I know I made the right decision. Your counsel was invaluable."

Case Study 4

A young company president and three of his executives were embarking on an aggressive hunt for venture capital funding. They recognized they were unskilled in business and dining etiquette and wanted to ensure their efforts would not be derailed by something as simple as what fork to use or how to introduce one another. Several training sessions were provided. Three fine dining experiences were held, during which she instructed in proper etiquette as the meal progressed. "We feel so good now about how we package ourselves," the president related. "The only thing that could hold us back now is a bad business plan--we have no fear that it will be our manners!"