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FabJob Guide to  
**Become an  
Image  
Consultant**



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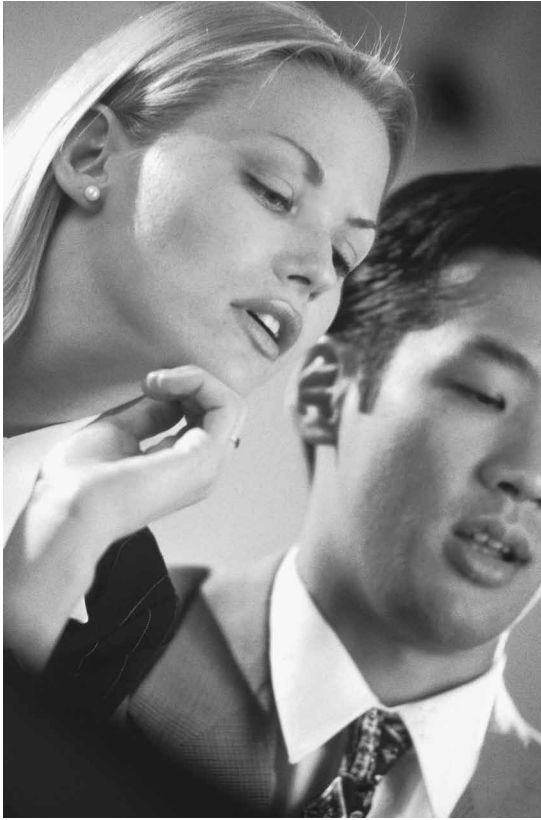
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## 1. Introduction

As an image consultant you will have a dream career, getting paid to do what you love—helping people look and feel good about themselves.

You will discover how to get started and succeed in this fabulous job in this guide, the *FabJob Guide to Become an Image Consultant*. In the pages that follow, you will read about the importance of image in people’s lives, see why there is increasing demand for professional image consultants, learn about the many benefits of this career, and discover the steps to take to get started.

### 1.1 The Importance of Image

Looking good is important to people throughout the world, and particularly in North America. According to a recent Gallup poll, seven out

of 10 Americans said physical appearance is important “in terms of happiness, social life and the ability to get ahead.”

And it's not just important for the young. *Parade* magazine published the results of a national survey of men and women aged 18 to 75 that found 84 percent disagreed with the statement, “When you become old, looks are no longer important.” However, while physical appearance is a significant part of image, there is more to image than looks.

### 1.1.1 What Image Is

*Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* defines image as a “mental conception” of a person or organization. In other words, image is the beliefs that we have about someone or something. It may be the impressions we form when meeting someone new, or it may be an individual's or company's reputation that has developed over time.

Our impressions about other people may be based on how they look, talk, or behave. A person's overall “image” may consist of a variety of factors including their clothing, grooming, tone of voice, vocabulary, facial expressions, eye contact, gestures, and social behaviors (also known as etiquette).

Just as individuals have an image, so do companies. While public opinion about a corporation can be influenced by advertising, there are many other factors involved in developing a company's image. For example, we may form impressions of a company when visiting their retail outlets, speaking with a customer service representative on the phone, or seeing a company spokesperson interviewed in the news.

### 1.1.2 Why Image Matters

Image matters because people often make assumptions based on limited information. In their book *Social Psychology*, H. Andrew Michener, John D. DeLamater, and Daniel J. Myers explain that when we observe a single physical characteristic or behavior in someone, we tend to assume that person has a number of other qualities, too. For example, someone may be perceived as confident because they have a firm handshake. They may be seen as trustworthy because they make eye contact. They may be judged as capable, professional, successful – even wealthy or intelligent – because they are well dressed. The reverse is also true.

## A Career by Any Other Name

A variety of different terms are sometimes used to describe image, image consultants, or image consulting. For example, you may hear image referred to as appearance, personal brand, or personal presentation. Or you may occasionally hear image consulting activities referred to as:

- Appearance Management
- Fashion Consulting
- Fashion Styling
- Image Management
- Makeover Consulting
- Perception Management
- Personal Branding
- Visual Branding
- Wardrobe Consulting

You could use some of these terms to describe yourself. For example, instead of calling yourself an image consultant, you might decide to call yourself a fashion stylist, makeover consultant, or wardrobe consultant.

Or you might decide to specialize in areas you'll read about later in this guide, such as: Closet Organizing, Color Consulting, Communication Consulting, Etiquette Consulting, or Personal Shopping.

## Personal Image in Business

According to Brian Tracy, author of the bestselling *The Psychology of Achievement*, "many capable men and women are disqualified from job opportunities because they simply do not look the part." Caroline Dunn and Lucette Charette of the National Research Council of Canada found

that “People are affected by your appearance whether or not they realize it, and whether or not they think appearance is important.” Dunn and Charette summarized the research in this area and found that a first impression has significant, measurable effects on the observer:

“Your appearance strongly influences other people’s perception of you:

- financial success
- authority
- trustworthiness
- intelligence
- suitability for hire or promotion

Your personal presentation [communication skills and appearance] influences people’s behavior toward you, including:

- complying with your request
- trusting you with information
- giving you access to decision-makers
- paying you a certain salary or fee for contracted business
- hiring you or purchasing your product

These perceptions and behaviors are consistent among observers and persistent over time. In other words, most people will tend to form the same kinds of opinions about you based on your appearance.”

## Image in Personal Relationships

Image has an impact on people’s private lives as well. You probably know from personal experience how much more respect you receive from store clerks when you are well dressed.

**TIP:** If you haven’t yet experienced this, try an experiment. Go shopping at a fine store dressed in what you would normally wear to clean your basement or move furniture. Then visit the same store looking well-groomed and wearing your best suit. Observe how you are treated by the staff, as well as anyone else you encounter, in both situations.

Beyond how we are treated by strangers or service staff, our image can have a significant impact on our happiness by affecting the development of friendships and romantic relationships. Children learn that looking or acting “different” often results in teasing and bullying. Adults experience similarly painful consequences.

Thomas F. Cash, professor of clinical psychology at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, has been studying the psychology of personal appearance for more than 30 years. In appearances on television shows such as *20/20*, and print media such as *Time Magazine*, he has shared his research findings that being physically unattractive results in discrimination against both men and women.

## Corporate Image

For corporations and other organizations, image can affect the financial bottom line. *Fortune* magazine’s annual rankings of most admired companies has found a correlation between a company’s reputation and its profits. Not surprisingly, the most admired companies have higher financial returns than the least admired.

In a study for the Council of Public Relations Firms, Jeffries-Fox Associates researched the business literature, and identified the following benefits for companies that have a good reputation:

- Increasing market share
- Lowering market costs
- Lowering distribution costs
- Being able to charge a premium
- Avoiding over-regulation
- Being able to weather bad times
- Greater employee alignment and productivity
- Being able to attract and retain talent
- Being able to attract investors
- Gaining more favorable media coverage

If a company's reputation, or image, is not as good as it could be, the company may be losing out on all of these benefits.

## 1.2 Image Consulting as a Profession

As you can see from the previous section, a poor image can be costly as well as painful. Both individuals and companies can experience tremendous benefits by improving their image. That's why a growing number of people are turning to professional image consultants.

### 1.2.1 Overview of the Career

An image consultant is a professional who advises individuals and companies about their image. According to the Association of Image Consultants International (AICI), the world's leading professional organization for image consultants, "An image consultant specializes in visual appearance, verbal and nonverbal communication."

### Types of Services

There are a wide variety of image consulting services you can offer to women, men, and companies. According to AICI:

An image consultant counsels individual and corporate clients on appearance, behavior and communication skills through individual consultations, coaching, presentations, seminars and workshops.

While consultations and coaching are similar, the former typically involves giving advice about what to do, or actually doing something for the client (e.g. organizing their closet or shopping for new clothes), while coaching may involve teaching or working with the client as they learn a new skill. For example, during a makeup consultation, you might tell the client what makeup they should wear, while if you are coaching the client, you might show them how to actually apply makeup. Many image consultants provide both consulting and coaching. Examples of the specific types of services that you might offer during consultations or coaching sessions include:

- *Image Analysis or Makeover Consulting*: giving the client feedback on the overall image they are projecting and helping them develop a new image

- *Wardrobe Analysis or Fashion Styling*: reviewing the client's current wardrobe, determining what should be discarded or purchased, and coordinating outfits
- *Color Analysis*: advising the client which colors they should wear
- *Makeup Analysis*: you can also coach or consult on other specific aspects of physical appearance such as skin care, hairstyle, accessorizing, etc.
- *Vocal Communication*: coaching or consulting on voice, grammar, vocabulary, etc.
- *Non-Verbal Communication*: body language such as gestures, posture, eye contact, etc.
- *Etiquette Consulting*: business etiquette, social graces, dining
- *Closet Organizing*: may be part of a wardrobe analysis
- *Personal Shopping*: buying clothing or other items for the client

In addition to advising or coaching clients themselves, most image consultants have a network of strategic partners they can refer clients to, such as hair stylists, makeup artists, dieticians, dentists, personal trainers, plastic surgeons, and voice coaches.

Image consultants are also hired to offer presentations, seminars, workshops, or training programs (the terms are often used interchangeably) on topics related to image. A company may hire you to give presentations on topics such as: dressing professionally (including dos and don'ts for casual Fridays), telephone etiquette for customer service staff, communication skills for new supervisors, and other business topics. Likewise, a college or government agency might hire you to present seminars for job-hunters on how to dress for interviews.

## Types of Clients

People are most likely to want or need a new image when they are preparing to make a change in their life, such as applying for a job or seeking a promotion. And, of course, there are people who may simply feel it's time to change their image.

As an image consultant, you can give these people advice on physical appearance, communication skills, and behaviors that will help them achieve their goal — whether it is to get a new job, to make a good impression, or simply to feel good about themselves.

You may decide to work with a particular type of client, or choose to provide a variety of services to many different clients. While many individuals hire image consultants themselves, you may also be hired by corporations or organizations to consult with individual staff members. For example, a company might hire you to help a new supervisor learn how to command respect through effective verbal communication, or to coach a senior executive on how to make a good impression during television interviews. Many corporations also hire image consultants to provide training programs for groups of employees.

In addition to the types of clients described above, some image consultants specialize in working with particular types of individuals, like:

- Beauty pageant contestants
- Cancer survivors
- Lawyers and their clients
- Politicians
- Singles seeking a mate
- Spouses of recently promoted executives
- Television personalities
- Transvestites and transsexuals

As you can see, virtually anyone who wants help with their image is a prospective client for an image consultant. Anna Soo Wildermuth, AICI, CIM, principal of Personal Images Inc., served as President of the Association of Image Consultants International. She says:

“Today, image professionals are beginning to be on the same level as interior designers. Anyone who wants to look their best and be appropriate will now hire an image consultant.”

But it hasn't always been this way. In the 1980s, image consultants were typically hired only by politicians, media personalities, and other high profile individuals in the public eye.

## 1.2.2 Growth of the Industry

While image has been important throughout much of human history (see the box on the next page for some milestones), image consulting is a relatively new industry.

John T. Molloy is believed to be America's pioneer image consultant. His bestselling 1975 book, [\*Dress for Success\*](#), introduced to the public the idea that dressing professionally leads to greater success in the corporate world. Molloy and his book received widespread media coverage. Over the next few years, an increasing number of people with a knack for helping others look their best began to offer professional image consulting services.

For the past two decades, the industry has been strong. In *The Best Home Businesses for the 90s*, authors Paul and Sarah Edwards reported, "Image Consulting has grown from being virtually unknown 15 years ago to a \$130 million-year business at the start of this decade." They accurately predicted, "In the nineties image consultants will undoubtedly expand still further."

Today the industry is booming. The exact number of image consultants is not known because most people working in the industry are self-employed and do not belong to a professional association. However, Marion Gellatly, President of the Association of Image Consultants International (AICI), estimates over 1,500 image consultants nationwide (compared with 1,000 in 2004) are reaping the benefits of helping people look their best while earning excellent incomes.

## Why the Industry is Booming

In 1972, a study by Thomas Cash found that 23 percent of U.S. women were dissatisfied with their overall appearance. A generation later, the number of women dissatisfied with their appearance had more than doubled to 48 percent. What this means for you is a huge market of people who could use your services.

## Some Image Milestones

- 1363 England issues a law restricting the amount of money the working class can spend on clothing, and prohibiting them from wearing silk and other precious textiles.
- 1431 Joan of Arc is executed in France. The charges against her include committing heresy by wearing men's clothing.
- 1895 *The Gentlewoman's Book of Dress*, written by Mrs. Douglas, is widely read by fashionable women of the time.
- 1963 Mary Kay Ash establishes Mary Kay Inc., paving the way for women to enter the workforce as beauty consultants.
- 1975 John T. Molloy's *Dress for Success* is published.
- 1983 Professional associations for image consultants (Association of Fashion & Image Consultants and Association of Image Consultants) are formed on the East and West coasts, respectively. In 1990 the two groups merge to form AICI.
- 2011 Millions of people tune in each week to watch reality TV shows featuring image makeovers such as *What Not to Wear*. Image consulting is hotter than ever before.

Much of this can be attributed to aging baby boomers. Ranging in age from about 42 to 61 (about 30 percent of the U.S. population), most are not content to grow old looking like their parents. Instead, many are taking action. Diet books continue to top bestseller lists, women's magazines are filled with fashion and beauty advice, and consumers are increasingly turning to experts who can help them look better.

According to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, people between the ages of 40 and 54 had 47% of all cosmetic procedures in 2009, while those over 55 had 26%. From 2000 to 2009, total cosmetic procedures increased by 69%.

And it is not just women who want to improve their looks. About 9 percent of all procedures in 2009 were performed on men, with liposuction, nose reshaping, cosmetic eyelid surgery, male breast reduction and hair transplantation among the most popular procedures.

While baby boomers form the largest market for image services, they have set the standard for all generations. In the fast-paced 21st century, with the image-conscious baby boomers, stylish Generations X and Y and very active seniors, looking good is a growing phenomenon that is here to stay.

As an image consultant, you can help people look their best, while enjoying a career that offers you a tremendous number of benefits.

### **1.2.3 Benefits of an Image Consulting Career**

There are many reasons why image consulting is a fabulous career choice. The advantages of an image consulting career include:

#### **Booming Industry**

Image is a multi-billion dollar a year industry. Opportunities for image consultants are increasing every year, with plenty of opportunities for newcomers. See section 1.2.2 to learn why this industry is so hot.

#### **High Income Potential**

Image consultants typically earn at least \$50 per hour, while those who offer corporate training programs can earn up to thousands of dollars per day. Some of the image consultants you'll read about in this guide earn up to \$200,000 per year due to their skills in corporate training and executive coaching.

#### **Flexibility and Freedom**

Image consultants can also enjoy the flexibility of working full-time or part-time — and even out of the comfort of their homes. True, they must be ready to go and tend to the busy people who use their customized services, but they often have quite a bit of leeway. While you may decide to sometimes work evening or weekend hours to accommodate clients, you can take time off whenever you want.

## Exciting Job with Opportunities to Learn

Image consulting is a fun and exciting career that offers opportunities to learn and grow. Susan M. Fignar, President of Chicago-based image consulting firm Pur\*Sue, started out providing overall appearance one-on-one consultations. Over the past two decades, she has experienced both personal and professional growth. She explains:

“I have taken a lot of what I have learned and developed and turned it into an image management and executive coaching series focusing a lot on communication skills, leadership, team building, and interpersonal communication skills.”

As an image consultant, the sky is the limit for you, too.

## Opportunity to Build Great Relationships

If you love working with people, image consulting is an ideal career choice. Becoming an image consultant is a way to make lasting connections with clients, strategic partners, and other image consultants. Catherine Graham Bell, AICI, CIP, of Prime Impressions in Kingston, Ontario, describes meeting with other professional image consultants:

“At the first AICI meeting that I attended, there was an immediate warmth and openness that I experienced. We call on each other for help with new questions and situations that arise, we share our research and refer clients to one another.”

## Making a Difference

Image consultants, like the ones you will read about in this guide, will tell you that one of the best rewards of being in the business is the positive change they make in their clients' lives. Bell says:

“It is exciting to see people gaining confidence, realizing that they actually possess the skills necessary to move forward, and developing new techniques to open new doors in their careers and personal lives.”

## You Can Start Now

Unlike some other careers, image consulting is a profession you can get started in immediately, regardless of your educational history or current financial situation.

While many image consultants have various degrees, you can become an image consultant without a formal education. Of course, as Karen Brunger, of International Image Institute in Toronto, Ontario, points out, “Some advanced education is beneficial. The higher your education, the more marketable you can be as an image consultant.” While no degree is necessary, in this guide you will learn ways to help you quickly acquire education and credentials.

If you have image consultant know-how but don’t yet have a huge bank account, you can start your own image consulting business at home with little or no upfront expenses. If you have access to transportation and a telephone, you have the basics to get started. Add some marketing materials, such as a good website, and you will be ready to start selling your services.

If any of these benefits sound good to you, read on to discover the steps to start becoming an image consultant.

## 1.3 Inside This Guide

The *FabJob Guide to Become an Image Consultant* will take you step-by-step through getting started and succeeding as an image consultant. These steps, and the chapters they appear in, are as follows:

Chapter 2 (“Areas of Expertise”) covers the major areas that image consultants work in. In this chapter you will get an introduction to visual appearance, communication, and behavior. This chapter also includes information about what image consultants need to know about corporate image.

In Chapter 3 (“How to Do Consultations”) you will learn how image consultants apply their knowledge and expertise. This chapter has information about how to consult with individuals and corporations, and how to find and work with strategic partners.

Chapter 4 (“Developing Your Skills”) describes how to prepare yourself to become an image consultant. Here you will discover the skills clients are looking for, and read about ways to learn image consulting through volunteer experience, educational programs, and work experience in the image industry.

Chapter 5 (“Starting an Image Consulting Business”) gives practical information on what you need to do to get started, including how to set up your office, choose a business name, and set your fees.

In Chapter 6 (“Getting Clients”) you will learn about the types of people that are most likely to hire image consultants. Then you will find practical advice on how to market yourself to get individuals and corporate clients to hire you.

The book concludes with stories of several successful image consultants, plus a list of helpful resources for learning more about all aspects of the career.

When you are finished with this guide you will know what steps to take next and where to go from there. By applying what you learn here, it’s just a matter of time before you’ll be where you want to be... in an exciting career as an Image Consultant!