

CHECKLIST FOR FIRST IMPRESSIONS

How we represent ourselves to job applicants and employees has everything to do with how we are treated in return. As the saying goes, “There is only one chance to make a first impression.” As we shall see, some of these “first impressions” are done on a daily basis. For example, the message that is provided by an employee entrance.

- Job postings – What message do you send out to job applicants? If you were to compare your ads with the others out there, what makes yours stand out? What is the first impression it gives?
- Your website – Job applicants will review your website to see what message you have put on it about your employee relations. If you have no message, that in and of itself speaks volumes.
- Community press releases - Are you constantly announcing the promotions and success of your employees in industry and local business periodicals?
- Industry and association awards – Do you hold yourself out to the public as a great place to work? If so, how have you proven it? How do you show it? Where are the articles and awards?
- On your vehicles, in your stores, in your advertisements - In the book *Good to Great*, Jim Collins talked about wonder company Circuit City. Apparently it posts on many of its entrances, “Always looking for great employees”. Think of the impression that sends out to the people who work there every day. To the people who might work there one day. To customers who visit daily. We have all seen how trucking companies state they are looking for “safe, motivated drivers”. How are you using your existing “billboard” space to brand your company?
- Telephone greeting – How does your “Director of First Impressions” answer the phone? How about starting with “It’s a great day at ____! My name is _____. How can I help you?”
- The waiting area – How are job prospects treated while filling out a job application or waiting to be interviewed? Are they treated like one of your most important clients? Is their name on a welcome board? If not, why not?
- Your working environment – What does it say to someone just by looking at it? Does it show on it how your employees are acknowledged? Are their pictures on the walls? Are client letters on the walls? Are employee awards on the walls?
- The interviewing process – We have written volumes about this, but at the bottom line, the way in which you interview someone causes them to want to work for your company, or not. Is it a rigorous process that makes folks understand this is a “special workplace” or simply and effort to get it over with?

- Orientation process – Management gurus will tell you the first 90 days of employment can make or break employee relations. How fine-tuned is your orientation process? Are you clear about its purpose? How are newcomers included into the team, group, culture and so on? How are you addressing the emotional aspect of the first 90 days of employments? Their fears? Their insights? Their questions?
- The employee entrance – It is amazing how many employees walk through a de-motivating entrance every single day! Ask a simple question, is your employee entrance adding to employee motivation or not?
- Uniforms – Whether it be affinity clothing or your dress code (casual vs. conservative) – what we wear speaks volumes.

Conclusion – We spend billions of dollars in this country trying to create an image or brand for our companies when it comes to clients and customers. We are beginning to realize how equally important this is when dealing with employees. There is no better time to build a brand or image than on the front-end of a relationship and to continue it thereafter. How does your company stack-up?

P.S. If you haven't already done so, it might make sense to create a similar checklist of first impression for your clients and customers.