

# Managing Your Impression Improves Business

By Don Kaufman and Karen Kaufman

Article Appeared in the Philadelphia Business Journal – September 4-10, 2009

Imagine, for a moment, that two people apply for a job in your company. On paper they look the same: same credentials, similar job experience, but when you ask them in for an interview, you find they are very different. Joe looks you straight in the eye and, by the way he answers your questions, you know he prepared carefully. Jim arrives with a spot on his tie; he fumbled his words, and failed to make eye contact.

Whom do you hire? If you're like most employers, you hire the one who made the best impression.

All relationships begin with an impression, some positive, some negative and some ambivalent. This we know. But what many people we work with fail to realize is that they can actually learn how to manage their impression more effectively.

Now celebrating its 30th year in business, the Kaufman Partnership has assisted many of its clients master the Six Principles of Impression Management that have helped them advance their careers:

**You are never perceived in a neutral way, you are always making an impression.** People believe what they see – so your dress, grooming, posture and poise, are powerful non-verbal signals. Ask yourself: “is my visual presence consistent with my role?” For example, if you want to cultivate new business for your organization or firm, do you look appropriate for your role and industry? Have you invested in your appearance in the same way that you have updated your credentials? If not, it's time you do.

**Success is determined by the perceptions created in the mind of yourself and others.** The impression you project will never be any clearer than your image of yourself, so it's important to eliminate the negative as you advance in your career. For example, if you believe you are not good at small talk, you might be inhibited from attending those all-important professional networking events. The way to overcome this all-too-common barrier is to learn to focus on those you meet. Someone interested in learning about another is more likely to discover mutual interests and compatibility that will ease the interaction.

**Impression Management can be learned through goal-directed activities.** Goal directed activities are things you can learn how to do to improve the impression you make. The Kaufman Impression Management System© shows people how to assess their impression along a number of dimensions and use this information to improve. We often find that individuals take their impression assets for granted and under-value them in developing business relationships. By identifying your natural strengths and talents you can apply them to your needs. Ask yourself “Do I represent my capabilities accurately?”

**Impression Management is a prerequisite for meaningful relationships.** In this busy world, we can easily overlook the simple courtesies that make a lasting impression. When was the last time you sent a thank-you note or told someone the difference he or she made to your career or life? On another level, how often do you give someone your authentic listening, so they really know you are paying attention? People want to be with and do business with those they know will listen to their needs and address their concerns.

**By managing your impression, you manage the relationship.** Relationships can be fragile. Unfortunately, we can't retract our words or actions. Being aware of and sensitive to this fact will allow us to take greater care and responsibility for what we say and what we do. All of us build our reputation one conversation and one action at a time. By being in business and assisting clients for many years we have realized that relationships are like compound interest: they double when you make consistent investments over time.

*(Continued on page 2)*



Karen Kaufman

Don Kaufman

# Managing Your Impression Improves Business

**When you alter your impression, you alter your relationships.** One way to evolve as a business person and a professional is to commit yourself to becoming more self aware. It is only through awareness that progressive development is possible. More organizations than ever before provide opportunities for employees to gain feedback on how they are perceived by others. If that is not the case for you, then you can seek input from others whose opinions you value. While rarely comfortable, feedback allows people to gain new insights. With these in hand, they can adapt their behaviors, alter their relationships, and ultimately enhance their effectiveness and performance.

Business professionals who learn how to manage their impression find themselves building productive and satisfying relationships that improve their businesses and advance their careers. They come to realize that by mastering the impression they make on others, they can gain more control over their own path to the future.

**DON KAUFMAN AND KAREN KAUFMAN** *are experts in the field of Impression and Relationship Management. They can be reached at 215-592-9709, [kk@kpartners.com](mailto:kk@kpartners.com); [www.kpartners.com](http://www.kpartners.com)*