

HR & Recruitment

How not to be the

Positive impressions: what you say is only one factor involved in creating a professional image, writes **Wendy Taylor**.

It happens every day in HR departments and recruitment company offices. A candidate walks from the interview room, heart still racing but feeling enormous relief that the interview is over. Meanwhile, before he or she has even pushed the lift button, a disappointed interviewer will turn to colleagues and grumble: "But he sounded so perfect on paper."

According to people who spend a lot of time interviewing, even senior people with

clients or colleagues with the same lack of respect, she says. And while some interviewers may accept that a candidate's sloppy appearance is because "it's casual dress day at work", it's much safer to turn up to interviews neatly and smartly dressed.

Others fall down due to a lack of preparation. They struggle to articulate what they do in their current job or what they would like to do in their next. Conversely, being over-eager to impress

spitting image of a bad interviewee



Sue Currie, from Shine Communications Consultancy, runs seminars on how to make a positive impression. Picture: Domino Postiglione

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pace and pitch of a person's voice are two critical factors influencing these judgements, she says.

"People talk too fast because they are wanting to get their message out quickly," she says. "They then sound nervous, and chaotic rather than calm and organised."

"Margaret Thatcher worked with a voice coach to lower her pitch by four octaves to convey authority," she cites as an example.

She suggests a range of strategies for people wanting to improve their voice quality including listening to recordings of their voice, role playing interviews with a friend or simply watching themselves talk in a mirror and seeing how their voice

changes when they smile or are more animated.

Sue Currie, director of Shine Communications, runs corporate and public workshops on creating a powerful professional image and business social skills. She agrees with Ms Whitlam that first impressions count. "People are often not aware of the impressions they make. People need to realise that it happens fairly instantaneously, in the first 10 seconds or so," she says. "So if you're late (to an interview) or come in rushed or upset, that will stay in people's minds."

For many people, job offers stem from meeting people through networking rather than formal interview processes, so

presenting well at such events is just as important. According to Ms Currie, as well as dressing appropriately, creating a positive image starts with being courteous and having good manners. "A common mistake people make is being a bit too pushy and thrusting a business card at people first off, but a networking event is about getting to know people and building relationships," she says. She advises people to remember why they have come to an event. "We have all been to networking functions where people have been chasing the waiters around," she says.

Further information: A voice checklist is available at www.voicedynamics.com.au