

# Fashion for Pros

**By Alice Fong**  
**Business Editor**

**Published: Monday, December 7, 2009**

Raleigh Mayer gives tips to the women of the FWA on professional etiquette.

Women are constantly faced with the dilemma of what to wear in a professional setting. It's a balance between staying conservative and standing out in the crowd. On Nov. 19, the Financial Women's Association invited Raleigh Mayer, principal of Raleigh Mayer Consulting, to present a program on executive image management. Women in the audience learned to polish their appearance and develop a more powerful presence for the professional world.



*Denis Gostev/The Ticker*

While men are bigger and bolder, women “need to have that gravitas, that weight, that heft, that substance,” to make themselves marketable and memorable, said Mayer. She spoke about the elements of impression — including, but not limited to appearance, body language, carriage, energy, tone of voice, and vocabulary — that affect how women are perceived and remembered.

Appearance, including hairstyle, wardrobe, and posture, is critical to professional success. 55 percent of the impressions made are visual. Deliberate style choices attribute to personal branding. “Make yourself stand out,” said Mayer, “or you are indistinguishable from the next person in line.”

Body language is also important in communicating presence. Women who slouch communicate a lack of self-confidence. Mayer suggested embracing their body types, by maintaining presence through good posture. Professionals should eliminate unattractive behaviors, such as playing with pens and hair and earring twisting. Good hygiene is also imperative. “We can sense when things aren't fresh,” said Mayer, “And that's a very important thing to consider” when appearing for an interview.”

Women are often judged with a narrower window of reception than men, said Mayer. Women need to be aware of a wide spectrum of behaviors available. “So we're powerful when we need <http://www.theticker.org/http://www.theticker.org/to> be,” she said, “and softer and more considerate ...when the occasion warrants.”

“Powerful, positive, precise language” should be used in professional settings. Mayer suggested using “hello” instead of “hi,” to avoid squeaking, and enunciating your first and last name, and pausing in between.

Mayer also demonstrated proper handshakes, which should be done while looking into the person's eyes, and introducing yourself with your full name. In the workplace, women should extend their hands for men to shake. Handshakes are an important part of professional relationships because “it's the only time you touch other people professionally,” said Mayer.

Women in the audience analyzed wardrobe selections through various photos of White House Office staff. The event ended with a networking session between the finance professionals.

---

**Contact Raleigh** [rm@raleighmayer.com](mailto:rm@raleighmayer.com) [www.raleighmayer.com](http://www.raleighmayer.com)