



## **Diversity! in the workplace**

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### **The People Package**

Product choice can be an overwhelming experience. Just think of your last visit to the grocery store - complete new product lines, innovations within brand categories and endless line extensions. And how the product is packaged has a lot to do with how well it sells.

It's the same when hiring people. The packaging counts. It can influence the selection process.

Have you ever been dazzled by a great first impression only to be disappointed once you got to know the applicant? How difficult is it for you to overcome a negative reaction to give your applicant the benefit of the doubt as you move through the interview?

In some cases, how people present themselves does directly reflect their capabilities. A sloppy resume with typos can point out a lack of attention to detail. Being late for an interview without an advance call or good explanation upon arrival may indicate a lack of good judgment. Simple good manners and courtesy in an interview bode well for positive relationships with your customers.

In other cases, being distracted by presentation issues may cause you to overlook a perfectly good hire. Dressing well for an interview, for instance, seems to be open to wide interpretation. For those of us who have seen too many navy suits and white shirts, that's a good thing. For some of us, it may appear the pendulum has swung too far the other way.

I know that sometimes, older folks view their best attire as the stuff they would wear to weddings or funerals. Not only are they uncomfortable, their clothes are often out-of-date and snug fitting. On the other hand, the collegiate crowd can roll into an interview like they roll into class, laid-back campus-casual clothes, ruffled, crumpled...and still snug fitting (some things are universal).

Others come dressed a little on the eccentric side, almost in a reverse interview move, literally saying, "If you understand and accept me as I really am, then I know I will fit in here. If not, it's better to know upfront that I don't belong here." Then there are people who are just plain inappropriately or poorly dressed. Either they don't know any better, don't have the funds to address their wardrobe issues, or genuinely don't believe how they look should matter.

I do advise job seekers to put some personality into their 'packaging'. This means more than adding colour to their wardrobe. It means adding spark and energy to their conversation and connecting with you – the

interviewer – in a focused and meaningful way, letting you know they can not only do the job well, but that they really want the job.

When the real person shines through in the interview you get a sense of their character, motivation and values, along with their qualifications. That's when we move beyond the limitations of packaging. That's when we make the best hiring decisions.

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