

Bulletin Board: Don't send out the wrong messages at work

by Maggie_Reed

Everyone wants to communicate effectively in the office. Most people probably believe they do.

But there are some nonverbal signals you may be giving off that are sending out the wrong impression.

Here are five examples and ways to remedy them:

- You shoot off brief but confounding e-mails. Your communications should clarify, not confuse. Make messages succinct and clear. While a simple OK is an easy way to reply, your brevity might be construed as dismissive or rude.

- You always keep your door shut. Certainly there are times, such as confidential meetings or conference calls, when a closed door is necessary. But a constantly closed door says, "Don't bother me ... ever." Instead, if you need peace and quiet to work, just leave the door ajar with a note letting people know they are free to knock any time.

- You constantly wear headphones. Some people need tunes to focus and concentrate. So go ahead. But, make sure that you go without them at least some of the time.

- You display overly personal items in your work place. You want to let people know you're fun so you have some goofy vacation photos on your desk. Some may see you as a fun person while others will consider it just plain unprofessional. Feel free to personalize your space, but use good judgment and taste.

- You take the "casual" in business casual to the extreme. Office attire has changed over the years, yet office etiquette still rules. While you may feel more comfortable and productive in casual gear, steer clear of flip-flops, sweat suits, tattered, dirty or revealing clothing.

These tips are from Robert Half International, a staffing firm with a global network of more than 350 offices.

TOO MUCH SKIN

Speaking of clothing, make sure you have enough of it.

If you don't want to put your career or your reputation on the line, Robert Half International suggests you avoid the following 10 taboos:

- Plunging necklines. The office is not the place to show your cleavage. Button up or wear a camisole underneath.

- Low-rise pants. It's best to cover your behind at work.

- Miniskirts. Once again, it's best to cover your behind at work.

- Belly shirts. Leave them for the gym, beach, home or going out on the town.

- Men's chest hair. Button up. This display has gone the way of the leisure suit.

- See-through shirts. Once again, cover yourself up. You want people to pay attention to your ideas, not your skin.

- Shorts. Unless part of a suit, shorts don't cut it at work.

- Open-back tops and dresses. These just don't work in the conference room. Wear a jacket or a sweater on top.

- Flip-flops. Leave them at the beach. Compromise with clogs, sandals or open-toed shoes.

- Skimpy, strappy camisoles. They're fine as a first layer, just make sure you have a second.

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