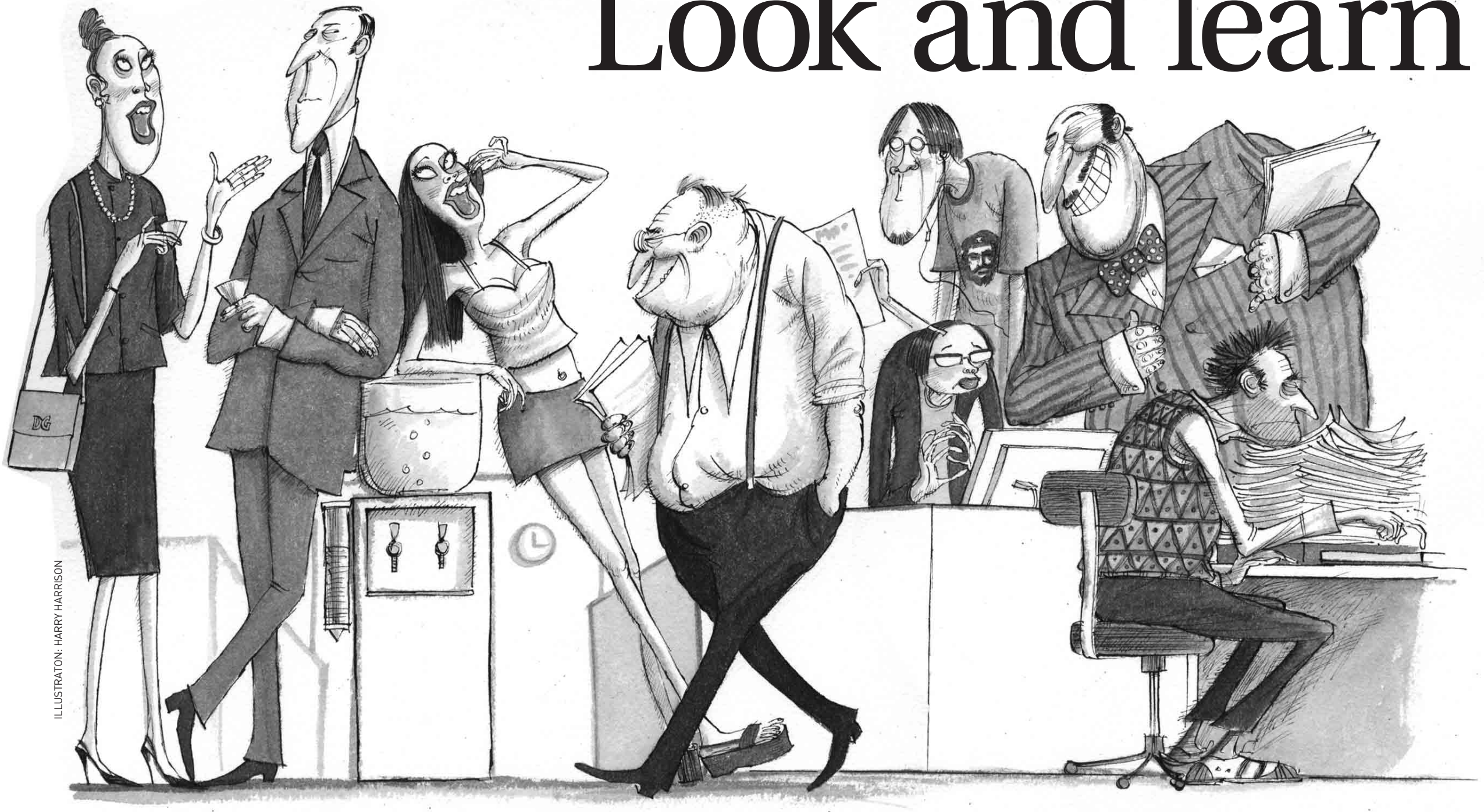


Look and learn



Ever wondered why you're always passed over for promotion? Try looking in the mirror, writes Hazel Parry

ON PAPER, YOU seem identical: same age, same sex, same qualifications, same work experience and same skills. But when it comes to the crunch, it's the other person who walks away with the job or the promotion, leaving you wondering just what you did wrong.

It's day one of your new job and you breeze into the office in your red designer suit with matching accessories. You look great, but when you try to start a conversation with your colleagues you find them cold and unfriendly.

If any of these scenarios seems familiar then perhaps you should take a look in the mirror. According to experts, getting on in the workplace is all about projecting the right image. Take a step wrong and you risk giving people the wrong first impression – something that can affect your work relationships and hinder your progress up the ladder.

Living asked Hong Kong experts what are the dos and don'ts of getting the right sort of attention at work.

Dress to fit in

Getting on means fitting in. Ditch the sports shoes, the high fashion and the back-pack (an accessory that screams "student"), and invest in new clothes and an appropriate business bag. Do your research. Look at your colleagues and take

note of their dress. Don't flaunt your designer labels if that's not the style of your peer workers. "People like to be and gravitate towards people like themselves," says image consultant Eve Roth Lindsay, of Savvy Style. She says you should plan your wardrobe like a business strategy, using three dress codes. Work out which fits your job and dress accordingly.

● **The traditionals:** These are bankers, lawyers, accountants and anybody in the finance world. "No one will look at someone well dressed and say he's not capable," says Lindsay. "Have one great suit in a neutral colour and add colour with accessories appropriately."

● **The "I work with people" people:** These are life coaches, teachers, estate agents and salespeople. Choose clothing that shows you mean business (but aren't threatening) such as relaxed suits – good quality and well-fitted – with more colour. Your clothes should say you're trustworthy, approachable and knowledgeable.

● **The artistic:** Artists, musicians, designers, writers, hairdressers and anyone in entertainment fit this category. Free and easy is the dress code. The message should be creative, unique and contemporary – and almost anything goes.

Groom and makeup

Research has shown that women who

wear makeup are taken more seriously than those who don't. (The studies include work in the 1980s from the University of Pennsylvania and last year from the University of Blaise Pascal.) Makeup is generally associated with high-status professionals and positive personality traits such as sociability, confidence, organised, tidiness and even cleanliness. That's not to say you should lay it on thick. Go for a little in colours that suit you. Hair should be styled and tidy, but avoid the stiff-sprayed look. Hands and nails are also important, says Lindsay, for men and women. Your clothes should be clean and ironed and shoes polished. A shave is essential for men, unless they're in modelling or the art world.

Choose your colours

Colours say more about you than you realise. Black says power, blue says trustworthy, and red says watch out. Base your working wardrobe around a neutral colour that suits you, such as grey, black, navy or chocolate. Subdued and darker shades will make you appear more professional. One of the faux pas of dressing is to wear bright red for a first meeting or an interview, says Lindsay. "Red is an aggressive colour and you should only wear it if you can back it up with a personality to match."

"COMMIT YOURSELF TO ALWAYS BEING AUTHENTIC AND PLEASED TO MEET SOMEONE AND YOU'LL BUILD RAPPORT"

M.J. Jennings Communications consultant

Careful with the cleavage

Don't dress too sexy. Women should think carefully about hemlines and necklines. The higher the neckline the more you mean business, says Lindsay. "Despite what you see on television, dressing sexy isn't appropriate for the workplace." Use jewellery and perfume in moderation. Men should forget about chunky bracelets, medallions and chest-revealing shirts and go easy on the aftershave.

Create the right first impression

"First impressions are made within the first 15 seconds – that's scary isn't it?" says M.J. Jennings, director of Active Communication, which trains business people to communicate more effectively. "Commit yourself to always being authentic and pleased to meet someone and you'll gen-

uinely build rapport," she says. Jennings recommends taking a look at yourself: the visual you, the vocal you and verbal you. Practise your handshake to avoid that "dead fish hand" or the crushing "gripper shake". Shaking hands and smiling are two of the things Jennings finds herself regularly teaching business people. The trick is to step in when you offer your hand, remember to smile and make eye contact while saying in your head: "It's so nice to meet you."

Use your body

We're not talking about the casting couch – simply use positive body language. Don't slouch; walk confidently as if you're going somewhere and are happy to be at work. When talking, make eye contact, don't let the eyes wander (darting eyes make people look shifty and distracted), lean forward and show interest in what the person is saying by nodding and adding affirmations such as "really" and "uh-huh". According to body language experts Ann Demarais and Valerie White, authors of *First Impression*: "Even if you never say anything, gazing, smiling and leaning towards others will make them like you more."

Get personal – but not up close

People are more likely to like you if you

show genuine interest in them. Show your human side and talk to them rather than send messages. "To develop a relationship you need human interaction," says Jennings. "But the PC, SMS and e-mail have taken away those skills and we're not very good at it any more." But remember that everyone needs personal space, so avoid touching and even air-kissing. "Space is very important to different cultures," says Jennings. "There's only one place you should touch someone in the workplace and that's the edge of the elbow if you want to gently guide them somewhere."

Don't fear the boss

There's a fine line between showing your boss you respect them and being pushy and appearing too cheesy. Jennings recommends being confident and genuine. Don't be scared of talking to the boss, but find something positive to say.

And finally ... smile

It's as simple as that. Smiling is a great way to win people's trust and make them think you like them. But make sure it's a natural smile. Smile with your eyes and avoid making it look forced and too toothy, says Jennings. Try practising smiling in the mirror to perfect a natural-looking smile you can turn on at those first meetings.

SUIT LAWS ...

Leung Kwok-hung may be a legislator but he'll never be a leader, according to style and image consultant Eve Roth Lindsay – unless he ditches his trademark Che Guevara T-shirt and books into a salon for some grooming.

"He makes a statement with his clothes," Lindsay says. "But it's hard to believe he'll ever be a leader when he isn't willing to conform to the traditional business way of dressing. I admire the man, but I still feel there's a code of business dressing. If you want to get ahead, you need to follow it."

According to Lindsay, who runs

workshops on business dressing for corporate clients, nobody dresses more like a leader than the man now in charge: Donald Tsang Yam-kuen. He follows the dress code while retaining his individuality.

"He wears traditional business suits but injects his own colourful style with his fun bow ties," she says. "He always looks perfectly dressed yet has a definite memorable way of dressing."

Using colour, in a shirt or accessory, can help you project your own style and individuality – even while wearing a traditional black, navy or grey suit.

"Colour has power and energy and is very influential," Lindsay says. "You can get a reaction wearing certain colours such as Henry Tang Ying-yen did when he presented the new budget wearing a bright red tie. He used it as a symbol to show that the budget was still in the red. But it injected a little comic relief into his presentation."

From left: Tung Chee-hwa and Leung Kwok-hung could do with sartorial advice; Donald Tsang and Anson Chan have it right



Politicians often choose blue because it's regarded as trustworthy, conservative and predictable. Yellow – a happy and mentally stimulating colour – is another popular choice.

"Politicians wear yellow ties to energise and give a feeling of confidence," she says.

"In fact, it's hard to think of Hillary Clinton and not think of yellow. Black, on the other hand, is the most powerful. It's strong and means serious business. Female politicians frequently wear black to show they're in charge."

Anson Chan Fang On-sang, Elsie Leung Oi-sie and Condoleezza Rice often wear black."

Former leader Tung Chee-hwa wasn't a fan of black. He used grey to make him more approachable.

"His image was that of a kindly gentleman," Lindsay says. "He was often described as a nice man. He might have been thought of differently if he wore form-fitting black suits with sharp contrasting white shirts and red ties."

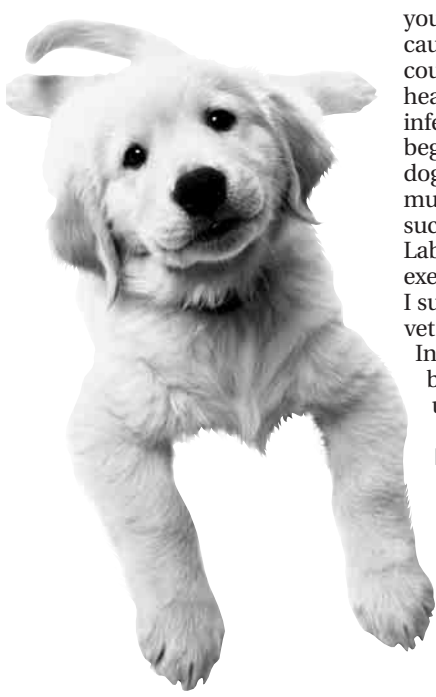
"He wore loose-fitting suits in easy colours that made him blend into the crowd and be accepted."

Hazel Parry

VET'S CASEBOOK

Can dogs develop asthma? My six-month-old Labrador gets out of breath when running and even when walking uphill – so much so that he has to sit down and rest. He even appears to wheeze and cough. It seems to have developed over the past month or so. I live in a built-up area and wonder if the pollution could be affecting him.

Dogs can occasionally suffer from chronic breathing difficulties such as bronchitis and tracheal collapse, which can be exacerbated by pollution. But I'd be concerned about your Labrador – six months is young to develop such problems. Have you had him checked by your vet? There are problems that appear more commonly in



younger animals that could cause him to tire easily and cough, including congenital heart trouble and parasitic infestations. These may begin to show only as the dog gets bigger. Also, some musculoskeletal problems such as hip dysplasia in Labradors can cause signs of exercise intolerance and tiring. I suggest taking him to a vet to have him examined. Investigations might include blood tests, radiographs, ultrasound and endoscopy.

I know all dogs scratch, but what's normal? My dog is always scratching – and when not scratching, she sits there licking herself. She doesn't have fleas and her skin appears normal. Should I be concerned? I don't want to take her to the vet if it's normal. She's a two-year-old mongrel

who I took in a couple of months ago when her owner was leaving Hong Kong.

It's true that all dogs scratch, but it does sound as if your dog is a bit over the top. It's possible she has mange or fleas, but it's more likely, if her skin appears normal, that she has an underlying allergy or disease called "atopy". This is similar to hay fever in humans, and the main indications are chewing/licking feet, scratching ears/face, and rubbing her rump. This problem and many others can be managed with simple medications, so I'd recommend taking her for a quick check.

Alison Main

Alison Main is acting senior veterinary surgeon with the SPCA. If you have any questions regarding your pet please e-mail her via hazel.parry@scmp.com.

PILLOW TALK

Ed Hayes

Kissing ain't old hat

There's nothing wrong with old-fashioned gestures such as tipping your hat or kissing a woman's hand, but such manners often leave people cringing.

I enjoy kissing a woman's hand, whether it's offered during an introduction or simply as another means of saying hello.

In some quarters, hand-kissing is rated as despairingly old-fashioned, but there's something jaunty, attentive and singularly debonair about it.

I read a newspaper article about this lips-to-hand bit – written with a negative slant. It was brushed off as an outdated, sloppy, toxic affectation. Rubbish.

It beats me why so many people are so intent on mocking or

eradicating so many of society's proven niceties, while throwing open the door to the boorishness featured on the average sitcom.

There are some women who frown on hand-kissing, just as there are those who take umbrage when I open a car door for them and make sure they're tucked in safely. Sorry about that.

For 60 odd years, I've tried to break this gentle gesture handed down by my father, who also loved tipping his hat. These days, I seldom wear a hat. But if I do and I'm walking with my wife and we encounter anyone, I never fail to respectfully tip.

Some women prefer the firm, walk-right-up, eye-to-eye, man-to-man handshake. Truthfully, I'd rather see that than a man and a woman, or two women, each raising an arm overhead and slapping the other's hand.

The over-the-head hand clutch seems to bear some merit in certain situations, but another

gesture that mystifies me is the knuckle rub, or butting fists as it's known in some sections of the US.

It's doubtful many people today would remember the song *I Kiss Your Hand, Madam* from the 1929 Bing Crosby movie *The Emperor Waltz*.

Crosby also crooned a more popular version in the late 1940s, "In dreams I kiss your hand, Madam, your dainty fingertips ..." It's a nifty number and hard to get out of your head once you hear it.

Please understand that I don't go around blatantly kissing any woman's hand. I usually use the handshake, but there are times when something more personal is called for and sometimes I see a glint in a woman's eye when I do kiss her hand.

I suppose I should seal my hand-kissing with a click of the heels, but after trying that once, this debonair old chap nearly lost his balance.

Knight Ridder