

# FRIDAY

## Spotlight

## Building confidence, boosting first impressions



"But it isn't about expensive clothes. Start at the most expensive store, see what the clothes cost and why. Then go to a place you can afford and always buy the best you can there.

**- Anna Wildermuth, AICI, CIP**

Elmhurst-based "Image coach" Anna Wildermuth says she helps her clients to build more confidence in and by the way they appear. "All they tend to think about is their negatives – we all do," she said. "Ninety-eight percent of the time people come to me because they want not only to look better but to be more effective in the business world."

Wildermuth puts priority in a consistent classic look, with a couple of key pieces that one can fall back on, "almost like a uniform." For women, that usually means a "credible" three-piece suit (jacket, skirt and slacks) with a least two coordinating tops. A blouse can be swapped for a polo or denim shirt to dress it down, she said. For men, two good suits are a must, or at least one suit and a blazer plus two pairs of slacks. The blazer is handy, she said, for the challenge of "corporate casual" now confusing men who have been accustomed to the certainty of business suits.

"All basic clothes should be interchangeable and an individual should settle on two main color choices," advises Wildermuth. "Always have three items in your closet that work with whatever you buy."

"But it isn't about expensive clothes. Start at the most expensive store, see what the clothes cost and why," she said. "Then go to a place you can afford and always buy the best you can there."

Purchases worth a bit more money? Good shoes (get them polished when you buy them) and a good handbag or briefcase, according to Wildermuth.

"We started buying store brands and clothes on sale," said Diane Jedlinski, a Roselle business owner who Wildermuth most recently helped to shop for an extended trip to Europe. "Anna would try for 40 percent off and for the first couple of years I didn't spend any more than I would have otherwise. ... She helps each person dress with what is best for them. It gives you more confidence, to feel as good as you can. And other people feel you have more authority," she added.

Fit is important, as is color, according to the coach. "Dark colors are more powerful and light ones more soft," Wildermuth said. "I wear light colors when I don't want to intimidate. ... Blues are easy to work with and promote an image of financial stability. Burgundy — a regal color — can put people off unless you're in the company of those who have more money. ... Regarding jewelry, I suggest women have a couple of key pieces they wear all of the time that make a statement. But especially for a first job, keep it conservative ... no dangling earrings."

A certified image consultant, Wildermuth coaches individuals on an ongoing, as-needed basis and works with corporations by developing dress codes, aiding upcoming executives and conducting seminars, such as Business as Usual on Casual Days. The charge? \$125 for a consultation; then she delivers a proposal. (She donates seminars for the YWCA Target Program for women re-entering the work force.)

Wildermuth sometimes shops with her clients and/or weeds through their closets. "Get rid of anything you haven't worn for at least two seasons, excluding formal wear," she said. "One woman I worked with had every piece of clothing she ever wore since high school and it took a day ... but you need to be very sensitive to people's feelings."

"The best part is when I see a change in a person. I give them an opportunity to see themselves differently."



**PERSONAL IMAGES, INC.**



*Discovering the style in you™*

**CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL  
IMAGE CONSULTING SERVICES**

**Voice (630) 530-9440**

**Fax (630) 530-9707**

Email: [anna@personalimagesinc.com](mailto:anna@personalimagesinc.com)

[www.personalimagesinc.com](http://www.personalimagesinc.com)