

## Behind The Scenes

### Certified Image Professional, Karen Brunger

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“You can’t learn much about a person in a thirty word biography”...that is what one of B Magazine’s readers e-mailed. We decided it was time to profile some of our feature contributing writers to allow you a peak “Behind The Scenes” at them – more than just 30 words.

Karen Brunger, one of the feature writers of Style Files, is a Certified Image Professional. Her career had an early start at age 7 when she taught herself to sew and started designing her own clothes (out of old sheets and fabric scraps no less) and created wardrobe plans for her dolls. Karen’s major at University was Human Development in the Faculty of Home Economics – now called Human Ecology. After a few years working outside the field, Karen attended the Fashion Institute of Canada, and took training in Colour Analysis.

Karen has progressed a long way from sewing with fabric scraps and is now the founder and Director of the International Image Institute Inc., and international President of the Association of Image Consultants International. As a trainer of image consultants, her systems and products are currently in over 60 countries. Her corporate clients have included Price Waterhouse Coopers, Microsoft, CIBC, Bell Canada, Rotman School of Management, BMO, Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Lexmark, York University, Environics, Ontario Bar Association, and more.

Karen optimizes appearance, behaviour, and communications to intensify authentic personal power. The result is an increase in opportunities, insight and skills. B Magazine was delighted to interview Karen at her studio.

**B Magazine:** What attracted you to a career as an image consultant?

**Karen:** As an incredibly ugly child, I loved the story of the ugly duckling turning into a beautiful swan. I fantasized that maybe someday I would transform, and that I would take everyone else who experienced themselves as being “less than” along with me. I like the idea of change on all levels - moving beyond our own limitations, and exceeding not only our own, but others’ expectations of us. Image consulting works as much with the internal as it does with the external.

**B Magazine:** How long did it take to develop your career?

**Karen:** I’m still developing my career! Actually, the development was never really conscious. I was playing at this as a part-time hobby, but opportunities kept being presented. The opportunities were virtually always beyond my capabilities or comfort level, but I never said ‘no’. Every time I said ‘yes’, I made a commitment to excellence, and did whatever it took to the highest level possible for me at the time. This may be what accelerated my business. It seemed that the smallest action on my part would create a result beyond what I would have thought possible. I felt, and still feel, that I am being propelled forward at rocket speed.

**B Magazine:** Is there a defining moment in your career that you would say catapulted you to where you are now?

**Karen:** Yes! My mentors – or people I would call my mentors, whether they knew they were mentoring me or not. My first mentor, Veronica, is the one that asked me if I could train other image consultants to do what I do. She encouraged me to set up a training programme, and helped me through the steps. She also introduced me to tools that lead to success, such as writing down goals. My first training was magical and transformational. When we left the training room at the completion, each one of us was different than when we had walked in just 3 days earlier. I realized that this work was much bigger than I thought. We were all bigger than we thought.

My business coach, Steve, also catapulted my business forward. Shifting to a higher prosperity consciousness really helped!

**B Magazine:** What is it like to work as an image consultant?

**Karen:** Awesome!!! For those of us who are 'called' to do this work, and would do it no matter what, there is nothing else. I have been offered other wonderful and well-paid jobs (including Fashion Editor for Chatelaine). I need to do this. I am grateful that people come to me so that I get to do what I need to do.

**B Magazine:** What are some of the highlights of your career so far?

**Karen:** I am grateful that I have experienced many highlights. There are some 'star' clients that stand out over the years as highlights. Like the president of an IT company whose income tripled after we worked together. He offered to pay me to have lunch with him once a month, just for the inspiration. I've been flown across the country and also to the States just to speak for 2 hours. I spent 6 years as the Style & Image Trainer for Seasons, which was the largest colour consulting company in Canada during the 1980's. I taught for many colleges and schools. My programme is currently being taught at George Brown, and my graduates teach for me. I started developing colour analysis tools, which led to other products and resources for image consultants. My firsts are highlights. My first client is still my client... my first student from another country that came just for my training. I founded the International Image Institute in 1995. My income is a highlight!

I have been on media tours as a spokesperson for various companies. I am now finalizing my distance training programme. Having someone helping me in my office full-time is a highlight. Thank you Denise! And now even Denise has an assistant. I received the international Award of Excellence.

I've had many highlights connected with the Association of Image Consultants International: Toronto Chapter President, International VP Education for 4 years, Chair of the Master Certification committee, and now I'm currently the International President.

About 10 years ago I was invited to New York to speak to the image consultants there on how to be successful in this industry. (I mention this because I find it funny. I grew up on a small farm in Manitoba with no plumbing or running water, and that has of course been a big influence. To move from that to this was a bit of a stretch.)

In October of 2007 I was the keynote speaker at an image conference in Australia.

**B Magazine:** What models, actresses, etc. have you worked on?

**Karen:** All of my personal clients are confidential! Often people in the entertainment industry want only styling. It was while I was imaging an entertainer for her European tour and cd cover, etc., that I came to the realization that I did not want to do styling. As I take a holistic approach, I no longer take clients who want only a change in appearance.

**B Magazine:** What styling tips do you have for our readers?

**Karen:** Dress to your possibilities. Find out your 'wow' colours. Go to the best hairdresser. If you colour your hair, do so in a colour that works with you rather than against you. Have great footwear in good condition. Have edgy eyewear. Let fashion serve you, rather than you serving fashion. Love yourself. Feel good in your body.

**B Magazine:** What project are you working on now and what are your future plans?

**Karen:** How much space do you have?? 1. My blog should be up by the time this appears. 2. I have at least 3 books in my head that need to get on paper and published. The first book - 'Wear It's At for Men' – just needs some editing. The second book is 'Wear It's At For Women'. 3. I will be making some of my workbooks available as e-books. 4. I will be doing one training a year in another country (this year is Australia).