



24 frequently asked questions about getting started

karen brunger, BHEc, AICI CIP

The questions below are asked of me on a regular basis. I have divided them into

- 1) personal experience
- 2) opinion
- 3) advice

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

1: *Did you receive any special training for this profession?*

When I started, I did not. I already had a Bachelor degree in Human Ecology, a certificate in Fashion Merchandising, and years of 4-H. I read whatever I could find on image, developed my own programs, and worked with clients. After a couple years, I did some training with Robert Panté in San Francisco. I continue to upgrade my training at the Association of Image Consultants International conference, and I also take additional training each year.

2: *How does the special training help you in this career?*

Robert Panté's training gave me the insight to identify images that sabotage, and to look for the image of possibility. The image of possibility is one that propels you forward, where there is no holding back, where there are no limitations, and where you can be, do, and have anything.

3: *Did your other professional or educational background or experiences help?*

Absolutely. All past experiences and education helped. The degree in Human Ecology covered how people relate to each other and with the environment. It involved counselling, psychology, sociology, human behaviour, nutrition, textiles, etc. The certificate in Fashion Merchandising contributed to understanding the fashion industry. 4-H covered the elements and principles of design, and included clothing design and sewing.

4: *How did you break into image consulting?*

I never said "no". If someone asked if I could do something, I said "yes", and then figured out how to do it. I started with colour analysis training, and booked my first month with clients before I had completed the training.

Those clients then asked me to clean out closets, go shopping, etc., so I charged a fee. People then started asking for style



analysis. I read everything I could find and developed systems for doing "style and wardrobe" consulting.

Seasons (the largest colour consulting company in Canada at that time) found out what I was doing and hired me to be their national Image Trainer. I designed their training manual and style wallets.

Image consulting and training then became my full-time career (1985). Participants in those classes then brought me into their corporations. Corporations started calling me to work with executives, and clothing manufacturers and retailers hired me to train their staff. I did corporate seminars, executive coaching, and keynote speaking. My repertoire of services kept expanding. I started teaching presentation skills, self-esteem and confidence building, etc. As people asked me to do more I said "okay" and did it.

5: *What type of image consulting do you do?*

Holistic image consulting (helping people change on the outside, as well as the inside). I incorporate a system of identifying and transforming non-conscious patterns that can limit us. When I teach, coach, or consult, I may involve this system.

I use outside resources whenever possible (hair stylist, makeup artist, voice coach, massage therapist, rolfers, cosmetic dentist, etc.).

6: *How do you deliver your services?*

Personal coaching, distance coaching, seminars, workbooks, booklets.

7: *Do you work for individual or corporate clients?*

Both individual and corporate. I like corporate because of the higher energy involved, reaching a larger group of people, and the higher fee. Individual coaching is relaxed and effortless.

8: *What do you do in your business?*

My business has 4 parts:

1. Personal consulting.
2. Corporate seminars.
3. Career training and professional development for image consultants.
4. Resources, tools, and products for image consultants.

9: *What does a typical day involve?*

Every day is different. I book as much time as I can to develop programs and products, update marketing materials, answer email, and respond to information requests. I rarely see personal clients, and I occasionally do corporate work. I employ a full-time office administrator, and she has a part-time assistant. I also use interns on a regular basis.



10: *What are your strengths?*

I am inspirational, motivational, empowering, creative, a visionary, an effective communicator, and confident.

11: *Do you have a professional designation? Do you belong to a professional organization (trade)?*

I am a Certified Image Professional (CIP). I am a member of the Association of Image Consultants International.

OPINION

12: *What is image consulting to you?*

Image consulting facilitates change. Image consulting works with Appearance, Behaviour and Communications to move people through limitations so that they can be, do, and have their possibilities. Image consulting helps people discover and experience what it is possible for them to be.

13: *What jobs are available to image consultants?*

Most image consultants are in their own businesses - usually as sole proprietors. Some work as personal shoppers in a mall or department store. Many image consultants combine their personal consulting business with another aspect of personal development. They can be makeup artists, corporate trainers,

therapists, voice coaches, motivational speakers, etc.

14: *How easy is it to be successful in this industry?*

The image industry has a very high turnover. To be successful I suggest the following:

1. Clearly define your niche. This is one in which you have experience, comfort, and credibility. Many successful image consultants make their income from corporate work. (\$3000 - \$7,500 per day is usual.) Corporate image consultants have a corporate image and are able to communicate at an executive level.
2. Market aggressively. Have a detailed marketing and promotions plan.
3. Have a vision for what's possible. Watch "The Secret" and read "Ask and it is Given".
4. Use a mentor or a coach. Others have paved the way for you.

15: *What does the future of image consulting look like to you?*

I see image consulting moving further into the arena of personal development. Many image consultants are already operating holistically (taking into account the whole person). We are as much (or more) into transforming people on the inside as on the outside. Because of this trend towards personal development, it will become more important to understand human behaviour and change. As it is our job to be "change facilitators", it is in our best interests to



constantly develop ourselves personally, and be in the process of “self-actualizing”.

ADVICE

16: *What personality traits or qualities are needed to succeed as an image consultant?*

Sensitivity, self-confidence, approachability, elegance, openness, personal power, a success consciousness, and ideally a high level of awareness.

17: *What are the must-have trade skills needed in this career? What skills have you found to be essential?*

1. Communication skills. Verbal, vocal, visual, as well as written skills are positive, effective, and high-level.
2. Business management.
3. Technical image skills. Check the ‘Core Competencies’ for image consultants at www.aici.org. Download and have a good working knowledge of the Key Terms.

18: *What do you think about apprenticeship (or internship) in this line of business? Is it a good way to break into the field?*

I always have interns working for me, in exchange for product or training. The mentoring relationship can help new consultants break into the field.

19: *What type of training(s) will be helpful to break into this field?*

- a. Business
- b. Technical image:
 1. Appearance: styles and colours for body type, personality, lifestyle, and current fashions.
 2. Behaviour: etiquette, self-confidence, body image, wellness, personal development, etc.
 3. Communications: human relations, interpersonal, presentation skills, verbal and non-verbal communication, etc.

20: *Any suggestions on the best schools in this field (that teach the trade skills)? What courses should I be looking for?*

You can take specialized training from Image Consultants. Check the Training page on the AICI website www.aici.org. AICI's international conference is a good source of training, and a great way to meet the trainers and their products.

As a trainer myself, I would suggest new consultants talk to those of us who train to get a feeling for the best fit both in terms of technical training, and on-going support and mentorship. I also suggest people get training from more than one source.

21: *What are your best tips for those who want to break into and succeed in this field? What preparation would you suggest?*



Have a practical and realistic business plan. Develop a vision for what you ultimately want to be doing, and write down the vision. Get a mentor (someone who has succeeded in this industry). Get some credentials. Believe in yourself. Be willing to do whatever it takes. Get a corporate client (even if it's in the fashion industry) - this will add to your credibility. Be totally committed and compelled to do this work. Join the Association of Image Consultants International, and attend the annual conference. Get involved with AICI, and serve on a committee or board; take responsibility for your industry. Take responsibility for your personal and professional development. Be open to opportunities. Live in possibilities (how something can be done) rather than in limitations (why something can't be done). Have a job to provide you with some security while you get your business started. Join (or organize) a Mastermind group.

22: *What is the best way to establish clientele?*

Tell everyone you know. Network and build new relationships. Get and maintain a website. Research all the likely sources of clients. Be a speaker at conferences and association meetings.

Cross-promote. Who do you know that shares your clients (bridal boutiques, spas, hair salons, etc.). In cross-promotion, you give copies of a "Gift Certificate" for your services. The gift certificate could be for 25% or \$25 off a consultation, for example. They would send your

certificates to their clients. It's a win/win situation, as it's a benefit they are offering their clientele.

Create a media kit and send it out; editorial coverage adds credibility. Get listed in the yellow pages and internet directories.

23: *Which companies hire consultants and which would you recommend?*

It's a great idea to work with a larger corporation, as you get a better understanding of corporate culture, which makes you more versatile and marketable. Use your contacts as much as possible. Do whatever you can to build new contacts. Think about where your "target market" hangs out, and hang out there as well. Join their associations, clubs, whatever. You may send an introductory promotion card to a corporation, and then follow up with a phone call in order to do a "needs analysis".

24: *What other suggestions or comments on how to pursue a serious career in image consulting and running your own business can you give me?*

If you're not sure how to run a business - read books or take courses. In fact, to pursue a career means constantly learning and taking new courses. Put yourself on a personal development program to constantly improve who you are as a person.