

Whatever your business or audience, always look the part . . .

. . . and that can mean everything from choosing your clothes to fit the occasion to selecting the right website design. **Carol Lewis** reports

Small business insights

If you work in financial services, the Andy Fuller you may have met would have been suited and booted and probably held the meeting in an office in the centre of town. If you work for a charity, then the Andy Fuller you know was probably clad in jeans and chatted to you over a coffee in a local café. Two different Andy Fullers? No, the same freelance graphic designer, founder of Designbull, but a man who tailors his approach to match his clients.

Mr Fuller is not alone. Many small businesses enjoy the flexibility of being able to appear larger when needed. Also in common with other small businesses, he calls on a range of associates and contacts to adjust the size of his team to match clients' expectations.

Appearing larger and more "professional" than micro-companies are sometimes perceived demands a range of often subtle approaches, including having a professionally designed logo, well-designed website and business cards with no address (preferable to an obvious home or serviced-office address). That said, "I tend not to look at addresses on business cards, anyway. And this way gives me the option of moving around and working from home without changing business cards. An e-mail, web address and mobile number are all you need."

Branding and appearance are also

important to Karen Moule, managing director of the two-person agency Enterprise Marketing Solutions. She meets clients in a nearby stately home. "If I don't want people sitting round our kitchen table, then we go there.

"When I started five years ago, there was only me and the thing I started with was my branding. I know the power of a professionally designed brand. I wanted a well-designed website and a business card printed on good-quality, thick stock. I didn't want to give the impression of being just me working out of my bedroom."

Employing the services of a telephone answering service is another way that Ms Moule creates a corporate image. She also runs seminars. "I want to position myself as an authority in my field."

It is an approach used by Lesley Nash, chief executive of the online recruitment company Changeworknow:

'An e-mail, web address and mobile number are all you need'

"It's about having something to say within the industry in which we work." Ms Nash does this by having a presence on social media such as LinkedIn and Twitter, entering industry awards, and using marketing and public relations. "We invested in public relations from day one, despite having very little money. We wanted to make a name for ourselves quickly."

Ms Nash believes that client recommendations and case studies are an



Andy Fuller tailors his appearance to suit his clients, from smart to casual

important part of the process. "We position it to clients as a way of telling their story and something that is helpful to their business and ours. We use the case studies in our regular breakfast seminars — everyone loves to hear a success story."

Challenging the way that people think about your brand is something that Adam Morgan of eatbigfish specialises in. His small business consultancy advises "small brands with

small appetites and big teeth". Creating a conversation around the brand is vital, according to Mr Morgan, whose first business card was a torch. "I wanted something interesting and remarkable that people would talk about with two or three other people."

Another tip for what he terms "challenger brands" is to create the illusion of a "two-horse race. You want to create the impression that there are only two choices. Think of Virgin

Act the size you want to be

- Personal presentation counts: be confident, dress to match client expectations, talk about delivery, not size
- Tailor meeting locations to clients — hire smart offices, a stately home or meet around the kitchen table, whichever suits the mood
- Invest in professional business cards, a logo and a well-designed website
- Remain flexible: appear large and professional, but use your small size to your advantage in offering a personal service
- Use contacts and associates to help you to deliver large projects
- Create the illusion of a two-horse race between you and the market leaders
- Act as if you are the future leader of your business sector. Act the size you want to be, which is not necessarily the size you are
- Use social media and blogs to attract notice to your brand
- Enter awards, run seminars, use PR, send out press releases and get quoted in debates
- Gather and use client recommendations and case studies
- Remember that once you are big, paradoxically you will probably want to appear smaller



Atlantic: when they only had two planes, they were giving the impression that it was just them and BA. Of course there were more choices, but they wanted to create a sense of stature. They acted as if they were the future of the category." But be warned, flexibility works both ways and "by and large companies want to seem big initially but once established they want to appear small and personal".

● Next month: *Where to base your office*

WAFFLE

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