

7 Tips on Training to Become an Image Consultant

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I receive many calls from both men and women who are eager to learn how to become an image consultant. Who you train with is a very important decision and it can impact your career success positively or negatively. In this article, I hope to cut through the confusion with tips on how you can choose the right image professional — the one who will teach and coach you on how to conduct a successful business.

Winning Image offers image training and coaching to people interested in becoming image consultants. It's only from my work as an image professional over the past 13 years that I know how involved learning this industry truly is. I have taken classes (too numerous to count), trainings in the industry (with a variety of image professionals) and attended many industry conferences all over the country. I feel overly qualified to advise you on this matter.

Anyone can call themselves an image consultant; in the past this has impacted the industry negatively due to a lack of professional standards. That is rapidly changing due to the high professional standards of the Association of Image Consultants International.

There is more to know than one could ever imagine when setting out on this very interesting and rewarding path of becoming an image consultant. Training with the wrong consultant for you could lead to a professional dead end. So here are some tips that you might want to consider:

1. Train with a member of the professional image industry association, the Association of Image Consultants International. A certified image professional (CIP) or master consultant (MIP) is preferable. In my case, I took several trainings over the years covering different aspects of the image industry — a few days of training with a qualified consultant on one aspect of the industry hardly makes you an expert in any field of endeavor. I realized that early on in my career and now recommend training with several consultants in your chosen area of expertise. Some consultants offer very specific training such as in color only but many such as Winning Image offer a few different areas of expertise and this is an advantage to you as the student. The more the teacher knows and offers in their training programs, the more you will benefit from their broad range of knowledge and experience in the industry.

2. Be prepared to spend money for your training. For a quality training experience with an experienced professional teacher, your investment will vary but it won't be cheap. Nothing worthwhile ever is! You get what you pay for, hopefully. Unfortunately, some trainers set high fees so that you will think that their training is more valuable than others being offered. I am sure that you have seen that in other industries as well. Be aware — spending large sums of money does not necessarily mean that you are getting the best training. Some people are all show and little substance. Use your judgment and trust your instincts. Make sure that they're not promising you the pie in the sky for big bucks. Keep in mind that some promises are just too good to be true.

3. Look for a training experience that translates into working with clients. You'll need to learn all the image theories to become the expert but that's not going to necessarily translate into working with clients. Find the right person to train you who will also be your support and guide while you get on your feet professionally.

4. Set high standards for yourself. Some of the image principles from the 80's might be familiar to you but it does not necessarily mean that they apply accurately today. You would not use out-dated software in your computer, would you? Then make certain that the person who is training you is using the most current information and techniques. And don't let anyone pressure you into taking their training. Be strong and think it out carefully.

5. There are many ways to achieve your goals. Many consultants offer internet training which has its advantages since you can learn at home. The best way to learn is to have a hands-on experience if you can. Finding a consultant in your area might be beneficial if you need that one-on-one experience and do not want to travel to get it. Figure out what your needs are and work within those parameters. I traveled to many of my trainings and kept in touch with some of the teachers and saw them at the international image conference every year. Having the support and friendship from others in the training and in the industry is also part of your experience. Keeping in touch with others in the industry will offer you valuable professional support.

6. Do some research and reading on your own. Be forewarned that the programs on television regarding how to dress may not be the best source for accurate information. Many TV personalities who do "makeovers" on these programs are merely stylists and do not have professional image training. Model yourself after the most qualified and skilled leaders in the image industry and know the difference - one is fluff and the other is substance.

7. An important part of your training must include your own image analysis. How can you be effective as a consultant when you have not experienced the process yourself? Have another qualified consultant take you through the process of

learning how to improve your own image. Then you will be able to speak from experience while looking your very best. YOU are your most valuable marketing tool – if you look good, you will draw others to you. Use yourself to sell your services. You cannot call yourself an image consultant if you are not able to apply the specific image principles to yourself effectively.

I urge you to take the time to find the right training for you. Become the consultant with the high standards and a moral code of ethics. Never stop learning and growing both personally and professionally.

Here is a visual recollection of my journey during many years of professional image training with the “image masters” that resulted in my becoming the first certified image professional (CIP) in Florida.

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