

# LASTING IMPRESSIONS

A WIDE COMBINATION OF VERBAL, NON-VERBAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CLUES COMBINE TO MAKE OUR PERSONAL BRAND. SUSAN BINNERSLEY AND LOUISE TATHAM EXPLORE HOW THESE CLUES CAN BEST BE MANAGED

When was the last time you thought about how you influence others? Do you understand what impressions you make on people or how to develop your personal brand?

The ability to influence and engage others at all levels – up, down and across your organisation – is a key skill and one that you are in

control of. By recognising your own strengths and weaknesses, what motivates you and how you manage yourself, you will be able to build sustainable relationships with others.

According to the Center for Creative Leadership, 75% of careers are derailed for reasons related to emotional competencies,

including an inability to handle interpersonal problems, unsatisfactory team leadership during times of difficulty, or conflict or an inability to adapt to change or elicit trust.

## What is EI?

To optimise your personal effectiveness and the performance of your team,

you need high emotional intelligence (EI). High EI will enable you to bring out the best in you and those around you.

‘Emotional intelligence’ is a term first adopted by psychology professor Michael Beldoch, but it is a concept that gained popularity following author and psychologist Daniel Goleman’s 1995 book (called *Emotional Intelligence*) and one that has become widely known and adopted.

The EI conceptual model looks at self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management.

## Self-awareness

Without this cornerstone, our chances of developing high EI are severely limited. Within self-awareness we need to understand our personal brand and what impact we have on others. What would our boss say about us? What would our team say? What information is available about us online? It is important for you both to know what is in your digital profile and to consider before people meet you what they might know and infer about you. Might they form any negative impressions of



you via your digital brand before you meet them? Forewarned is forearmed.

Understanding our complete professional reputation is a key step in being able to develop our relationships.

### Self-management

Once you understand what impact you have, you then need to think about what impact you want to have. How do you want others to see you? What do you need to change to achieve this? You can control your own behaviour and, therefore, if you want to change something in your work environment, you can be the catalyst for that change.

### Social awareness

We all work within an organisational system, so it is worth considering what is culturally right within your own system and across other systems that you interact with. How well do you fit and what might you need to self-manage to have an impact with your own setting and across your wider networks?

### Relationship management

Consider your audience: what are your competencies and how can you use these to maximise your impact and increase your influence? Digital conversations are also important – how do you interact with others online?

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### Visual impact

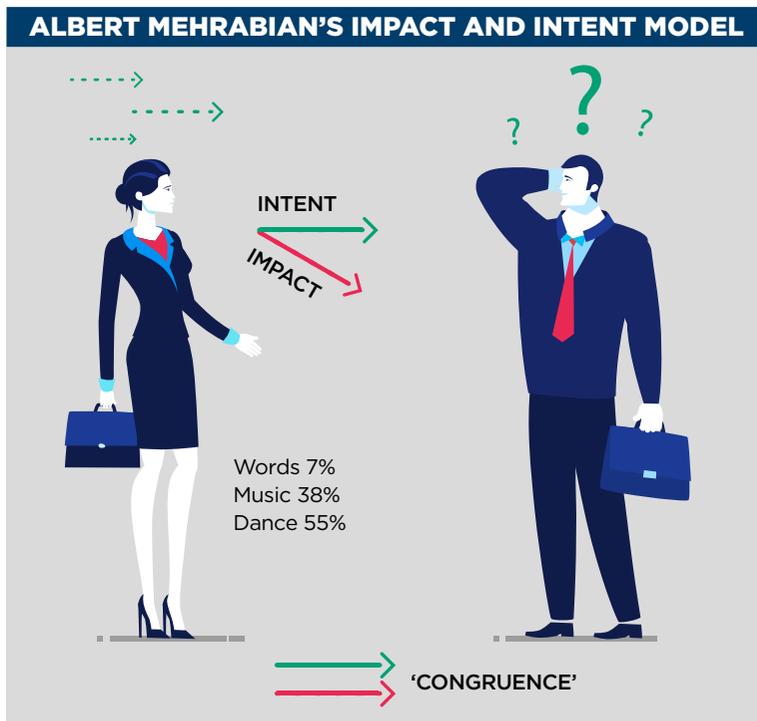
We create an impression the minute we make contact with another person – via visual, auditory or digital signals. First impressions about confidence, success, trustworthiness and flexibility are often instantly created by the way we look, act and speak. For example, if you are giving a presentation, people will observe what you are doing the minute you walk into the room, not just when you stand up to speak.

How to create an appropriate first impression:

1. Pay attention to how you look from top to toe.
2. Be comfortable and wear clothes and accessories that you are comfortable in and fit well.
3. Be aware of your non-verbal habits, behaviours and tics.
4. Ask a friend for (honest) feedback.
5. Remember, you are never off camera.

### Behavioural branding

Psychologist Albert Mehrabian, famous for his work on verbal and non-verbal signals, conducted a series of experiments to look at how people communicate, especially when conveying a difficult message. He looked at the intent – the results they wanted to achieve or the message they wanted to communicate; and the



impact – how their behaviour was actually received by the other person. Differences between impact and intent are often found when the words, music (how you say things: pitch, pace and tone) and dance (how you behave when you are talking, including non-verbal signals) are not all carrying the same message.

Our words, music and dance need to be in tune with each other to communicate effectively. By achieving that, you can ensure that you create the best impression and maximise your influence.

One final thought is that people will remember how you made them feel and not necessarily what you said to them. If you look at your professional career, think about the people who have managed you and the difference between a good

and bad boss. How did they make you feel? If you are made to feel empowered and supported, you will be at your best, even if you have a challenging and demanding boss.

As the writer Maya Angelou put it: "I've learnt that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." 💡

**Susan Binnersley** (left) is an organisation development consultant, career coach and founding director of h2h consultancy; and **Louise Tatham** (right) is head of professional development at the ACT

