



How do you make a splash at work? Do you dress for success or excess? Star Online assistant editor SOO EWE JIN went to style school and discovered what it takes to be, literally, a cut above.

Pictures by RICKY LAI

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# Dress for success

The secret to immaculate grooming for the Gentleman of the New Millennium, I have recently discovered, is tucking your shirt into your underwear, and not over it.

If you don't believe me, you can ask the women in our group, who likewise discovered that the secret to immaculate grooming for the Lady of the New Millennium is making sure that bra straps and underwear lines are not visible.

Some may argue that the in-thing is for men to show off their branded underwear by wearing loose pants while women may want to take it one step further by actually wearing their underwear over their clothing, a la Madonna.

But we are talking professional corporate behaviour here where rules are plenty and a *faux pas* can potentially damage your ascent up the corporate ladder of success.

For example, if you were walking towards a door at the same time as your managing director, do you:

- Open the door for him?
- Let him open the door for you?
- Open the door for yourself and ignore him?



● Dress and act well and you could go places, says Dolly Kee (inset).

The answer is not as obvious as it seems. The gender and the age, and whether the door is in a business or social environment, are factors that come into play.

I was totally confused with the multitude of possibilities.

For the men, fortunately, there was a fail-safe approach. In all instances, said the trainer,



approach" but we were quite happy to throw her the exceptions to the rules.

"This is the first time in eight years..." Dolly would say as we did our best to make her job more difficult.

On day one, it was clear that we all needed help (BIG HELP) to improve our grooming standards. A simple rating system showed that we were, at best, average.

But after all the interesting lessons on proper grooming (I can't reveal all as Dolly might not be able to offer any more lessons after this), plus extra doses of confidence-building, I thought I would give her a little surprise the next day. And so did the rest of the class.

So on Day Two, lo and behold, it was no longer a roomful of journalists and marketing executives. The training room had been transformed into the executive boardroom of a Fortune 500 company.

We men showed that we knew how to tuck in our clothes, wear our ties, buckle our belts, iron our shirts, clean our teeth, clip our nosehair. In a nutshell, we knocked 'em dead.

The women, too, came in their corporate best — simplistic elegance with a touch of sophistication.

Suddenly, Dolly felt underdressed, and it sure made us happy for a good 24 hours when it was rumoured that on that day in Menara Star, everyone was talking about us.

Beyond the packaging part, we also went through sessions that sought to develop our professional self-image. We learnt to move from being inhibitors to motivators. And of the danger of self-fulfilling prophecies.

At the end of it all, we also found out, through an interesting 40-question test, if we were insecure, humble, self-effacing, self-confident or arrogant.

How did I rate? Well, we have all been sworn to secrecy but if this article perks up your curiosity, you can always pick up the phone to Image Power and say two magic words, "Hello Dolly!". ■

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## Striking out on her own



TOP: Dolly (Left) enjoys helping people be the best they can be.



LEFT: Getting the Editor of Weekender Sharifah Intan to do the cha-cha.

act like a gentleman and you can't go too far wrong. Whether all men know how to act like gentlemen is another issue altogether.

So it was that over two days, our group comprising mainly editorial staff from *The Star*, were indoctrinated into the ways of "power imaging" — how to dress, how to eat, how to talk, how to behave, and how to enhance our personal and professional identity.

We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. After all, it's not everyday that you get to show off your singing prowess and cha-cha skills. Or learn to set a table for fine dining.

What a surprise for us when it became clear as we proceeded from one module to the next (The power of first impressions, What constitutes a professional image, Power dressing, Grooming and Poise for success, etc) that we all obviously needed the course despite our initial scepticism.

"If you do not have substance, then all the packaging in the world will mean nothing," declared our most efficient trainer Dolly Kee, obviously a Lady of the New Millennium.

"But if you do have the substance already, then packaging will certainly help."

Well, it is comforting to know that we were probably chosen for the course in the first place because we do have "some isi (substance) and management just felt we needed some gaya (style) as well!"

We were a noisy class, prepared to argue with Dolly on every point. There was no denying her "strong theoretical