

# Soft skills necessary for MBA holders

By Prasanna Raman

MANY think that success naturally comes with the acquisition of an advanced academic qualification like the MBA. They believe moving up the corporate ladder becomes easier with their newly acquired paper qualification.

Although it may help, one must know that there are other factors which contribute to a person's success. One such factor lies right under our noses – our very own image.

"Image is a communication tool which expresses our strengths, our attitudes and our attributes. Image is certainly not a way to fool others. Our image, be it personal or professional, should be a genuine expression of ourselves, but that expression has to be appropriate to the culture, environment or situation in which we are functioning," said Image Power director, Dolly Kee.

Image, she said is also a perception, as how we are perceived by others, will determine how we are treated.

"If we want others to take us seriously and view us as a corporate professional, we must first view ourselves as one. Only if we look like a professional, talk like one and behave as one, can we be perceived as one," she said.

As one's image is said to be their power, those who make good impressions seem to carry more credibility than those who don't.

Many people too, Kee said, underestimate the importance of enhancing their professional image.

"Image helps build our credibility and reputation. And in a competitive business environment, it translates into an added advantage that is crucial in en-



Kee: Develop greater poise and personal confidence.

surging business and career success," she added.

According to Kee, there are two ways to enhance one's image.

First is to build one's image from the outside starting with all the image tangibles – the "outside" that people can notice about us.

This, she said, includes personal grooming, hair style, colour and style of clothing, accessories, visual poise and deportment, body language, gestures of confidence, making effective presentations, language skills, socialising skills, business and social etiquette, and protocol.

"Secondly, it can be built

from the inside-out through developing one's own self-confidence and self-esteem, empowering oneself with a positive attitude," she said.

By changing what we see and feel on the inside, she elaborated, we will begin to make the corresponding changes on the outside.

"So, eventually, the way we see ourselves and the way other people see us will both begin to change," she said.

Investing in our professional image, Kee said, is today no longer a luxury but rather a necessity as how we project ourselves will have a definite impact on our careers.

"Enhancing our image will enable us to communicate more effectively through our image tangibles, develop greater poise and personal confidence in dealing with people of all levels and of different stature in society, handle social and professional situations with total ease and confidence, and command a stronger presence by applying the principles of successful imaging to project a winning professional corporate image," she added.

## Tips on enhancing image

1. Look professional...always
2. Enhance your language skills
3. Build a reputation for credibility, reliability and authenticity
4. Demonstrate personal integrity
5. Believe in yourself
6. Commit to high personal quality standards
7. Master the rules of business etiquette and protocol
8. Develop your social skills and networking ability
9. Increase your professional visibility
10. Build on cumulative knowledge and experience