

**Linda Thomas AICI CIP** designs and delivers *"Image Awareness"* programs throughout corporate America. Linda earned the credentials of Certified Image Professional through the Association of Image Consultants International, is an award winning member of the National Speakers Association of North Texas and a published author.



## Innovative Authentic Education: "Have you heard... Business Casual is on the way out?"

### Past Seminar Recipients

- Alliance of Technology and Women
- Amarillo Globe-News
- Army Air Force Exchange Service
- Boeing - Corinth Leadership Association
- CCA - Christian Community Action
- Chapman, Hext & Co., P.C.
- City of Irving
- Cityplace Conference Center Sales Force
- CWS Apartment Homes/CWS Capital Partners
- Dallas County Community College District
- Dallas Network of

On September 23, 2002, newspapers throughout the United States announced that both Bank One and The Bear Stearns Companies (a Wall Street brokerage and investment banking firm) were reversing their Casual Dress policy. Men now would be expected to come to the office dressed in suits and ties, and women would be required to wear suits or dresses with nylons. With the bursting of the "dot com bubble" and the tightening of the employment market, employers across the nation no longer were quite so concerned that their valuable staff members could be lured away by competitors offering Casual Dress as a benefit. Corporate managers now sought employees who would reflect the company's image in their personal appearance, just as it was reflected in the firm's landscaping and physical property, its décor and furnishings, its printed materials, and its Web presence.

Initially, the introduction of more casual attire in the corporate workplace was welcomed across the United States by managers as well as employees. Managers believed that work habits would improve if employees were permitted to dress more comfortably. Gradually, however, the trend got out of hand. Now that casual attire in the workplace has been an established policy for more than ten years in over 52% of US corporations, employees have begun to "push the envelope" ~ frequently arriving at the office dressed in clothing more appropriate for working on the lawn than on an important proposal or contract!

And with summer upon us, some businesses are adopting a more casual dress code in order to accommodate their workforce during the warmer weather. This can lead to problems, however, particularly among female employees who sometimes select summertime clothing that reveals too much skin ~ such as plunging necklines, shorts, miniskirts, and navel-revealing crop tops. Under the circumstances, it is no surprise that so many companies are sending their business overseas where wages are lower and employees dress as if they have

- Career Women
- Denton's Young Professionals
- Flextronics Network Services
- Foodservice Leadership Group
- Fort Worth Star-Telegram Ad Academy
- Four Seasons Resort & Club
- Glaxo Smith Kline
- Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Lewisville Assoc. of Realtors
- Hampton Inn
- International Association of Administrative Professionals
- Leadership & Productivity Institute
- Meeting Professionals International
- Merrill Lynch
- Northwestern Mutual Financial Network
- Omni Mandalay Hotels
- Panhandle Human Resource Association
- Pricewaterhouse Coopers LLP
- Right Management
- SMU - School of Engineering
- Southwest Human Resource Management Conference
- Sun Microsystems
- SWACE - Southwest Association of Colleges & Educators
- TECCOR
- Texas Education

respect for themselves, their jobs, and their employers.

One of the problems resulting from casual attire in the workplace has been the assumption by many employees that "casual" implies "no rules". Outfits that could be considered Weekend Casual are being worn to work during the week. Studies have shown that the lax nature of workplace attire affects the atmosphere.

When employees see themselves and their colleagues dressed as if they are participating in off-duty activities, they begin to behave correspondingly. Eventually, managers are forced to draw the line ~ as in the case mentioned above involving Bank One and Bear Stearns. They now are requiring their workers to adhere to a stricter dress code, leaving many employees to ask, "Just what is Business Appropriate?"

Ms. Linda Thomas established her image training consultancy in 1999 when The Associates and Sun Microsystems each asked her to assist them in initiating a new corporate dress code by providing instruction for the employees on the topic of Business Casual.

Ms. Thomas's expertise now frequently is sought by companies throughout the United States, whether they are recovering from the effects of "Casual casualties" or simply wishing to instruct their workforce in the area of appropriate professional dress. This is not the complex labyrinth that many employees dread, as Ms. Thomas makes clear in her fun, informative, interactive seminars. Attendees often are surprised at the valuable information they acquire.

For instance, Ms. Thomas explains that the hot, stiff suits that may have been worn during the 1980s or 1990s will never be made again. The garment industry now manufactures light-weight wools that feel like silk. An inspection of clothing labels reveals that many new fabrics have a 2 to 4 % microfiber content which helps prevent wrinkling. Microfiber fabrics also provide more "give" along the seam lines, increasing the comfort level of the clothing.

As Ms. Thomas has seen in her seminars, some of the resistance to dressing more traditionally stems from the fact that many Americans have gained weight since they stopped wearing suits and jackets. They currently have closets full of traditional outfits that they no longer are able to wear. Ms. Thomas tells her seminar attendees that it is best to donate this clothing to programs that help individuals who are entering or re-entering the workforce.

According to Ms. Thomas, the most important lesson attendees can take away from her seminars is this: Be sure you understand your body's proportions, so that you will wear clothes that fit your body as it is today. We draw unwanted attention to ourselves when we attempt to hide our body shape with clothing that is too large ~ or when we attempt to appear younger than our age with clothing that is too tight or revealing.

Powerful Appearance seminars are designed to educate men and women in the area of personal appearance, empowering them with the ability to shop choosing intelligently for clothing that will enhance their personal and professional lives.

- Call **940-321-2594** or E-mail [Linda@powerfulappearance.com](mailto:Linda@powerfulappearance.com) to discuss with Linda Thomas your company's image questions, and to find

- Agency
- Texas Instruments
  - TGI Friday's
  - The Associates
  - Travis Wolff  
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  - UNT - University of  
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  - Women in  
Insurance &  
Financial Services

out if Powerful Appearance Seminars would be a fit for your company.

- Visit [http://www.powerfulappearance.com/case\\_studies.htm](http://www.powerfulappearance.com/case_studies.htm) for a link to two case studies that were done for PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and the City of Irving, Texas.

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Linda Thomas AICI, CIP, Corporate Image Advisor and author of **My Closet, My Boutique: How to Organize Your Image**, designs training for companies who wish to encourage their employees to present themselves as positive, professional, and effective. For a list of programs and products, visit Powerful Appearance web site.

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