

all of your planning will reflect the personality and character that is the foundation of your venture.

The most important factor to keep in mind in defining your company's image and culture is to maintain consistency. If the image you want to present to the world is buttoned-up and serious, your culture within the company should follow suit, for the most part. An inconsistent message will turn off clients, disillusion employees, and make it difficult to identify and manage expectations. A consistent theme will strengthen your venture's goodwill and integrity, as image and culture are inextricably linked.

## Image

Your company's image is defined by how your customers, vendors, and other outsiders see your business. While your marketing materials, such as the logo, provide a start in developing an image, your interactions with others make a far stronger statement. The image you strive to present should incorporate the desires of your target market and the features of your product or service, as well as your own personality.

If you are a suit and tie individual, it may be difficult to promote a t-shirt and flip-flops image – you are likely to end up frustrated, disillusioned, and disinterested in your work. Instead, consider the image that you are most comfortable projecting yourself and how well it relates to your target market and the work environment you foresee. Find a compromise that will satisfy outsiders and make you and your employees love going to work.

Business images are loosely categorized into six groups:

- **Traditional** – Projects strength, safety, stability, low risk. Commonly seen among banks, professional services, and high-end retail products and stores.

- **Natural** – Projects authenticity, organic, down-to-earth, environmentally friendly. Commonly seen among specialty grocers, greenhouses, and psychotherapists.
- **Floral** – Projects class, calm, soothing, feminine, decorative. Commonly seen among interior designers, florists, gift shops, and restaurants.
- **Creative** – Projects originality, innovation, novelty, freshness. Commonly seen among marketing firms, clothing designers, publishers, and entertainment companies.
- **Casual** – Projects enthusiasm, informality, approachability, spontaneity. Commonly seen among pediatricians, daycare, pet stores, and restaurants.
- **Technological** – Projects precision, skill, tech savvy, and authority. Commonly seen among software and hardware companies, service companies, and consultants.

Another factor in business image is the colors that you choose for your logo, product packaging, and other business needs. While there are entire consulting companies built on the science and art of color, here are a few generalizations to get you started.

- **White** – Simplicity, purity, cleanliness. White is perceived as a bright color and catches the eye. Commonly used for medical, infant, and health-related companies.
- **Black** – Serious, powerful, elegant, classic, traditional. Black is used to provide high contrast against bright or light colors. It is commonly used for high-end products. In some uses, it appears gothic or mysterious.
- **Red** – Passion, aggressive, energetic, danger, excitement, attention. Red can increase heart rate, breathing rate, and adrenaline production. It is commonly used for products