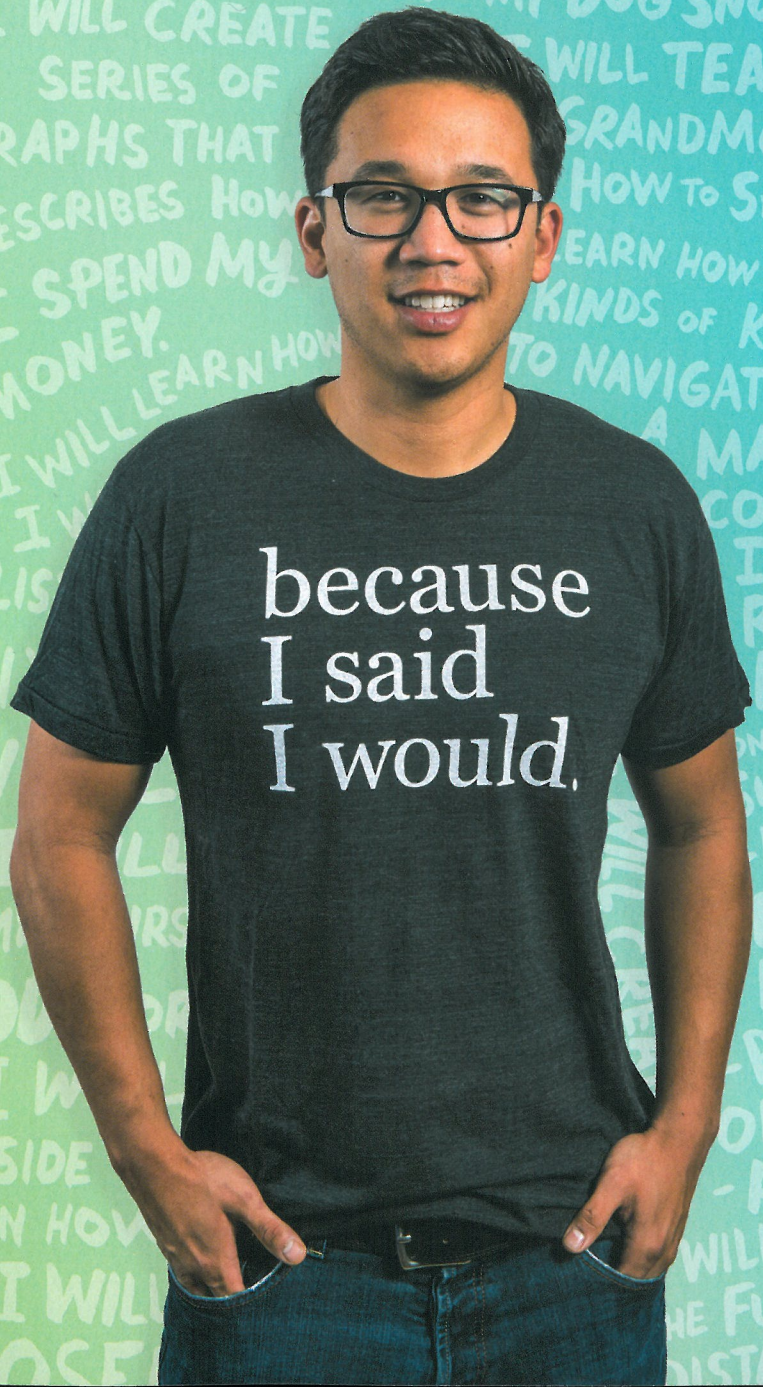


# spirit

**SOUTHWEST AIRLINES + AIRTRAN**

**ALEX SHEEN  
KEEPS HIS  
PROMISES.  
HE'LL INSPIRE  
YOU TO  
DO THE SAME.**



SCHOOL

# Groom For Improvement

Looking to enhance your brand at work? Don't be *that* guy.

BY JILL COODY SMITS

**I**F YOU DON'T think image is everything, ask Miley Cyrus. In August, the erstwhile teen idol and Disney money machine twerked her way to infamy at the 2013 MTV Video Music Awards. It's a fine line between cheeky provocation and global embarrassment, and Cyrus's calculated attempt to literally shake off her PG persona and, well, thrust herself into the pantheon of outré stage performers alongside Britney Spears and Madonna backfired big-time. "Reminiscent of a bad acid trip" is how *The Hollywood Reporter* described the preposterous and lewd spectacle. *Vogue* tastemaker Anna Wintour pulled Cyrus off the cover of the fashion bible shortly after the debacle. And months later the Twitterverse is still trying to make sense of what was going on with...*the tongue*.

Cyrus is too much of a showbiz pit bull to be chastened by bad press, and in today's pop marketplace even schadenfreude sell records. But her high-profile fizzle is a reminder that we're all just a few missteps away from being knocked off our own professional pedestal. For better or worse, we CONTINUED ON PAGE 66

**C.E.O. NO-NO**  
There's very little upside to dressing down at work.



each have a rep to protect, and our bosses, colleagues, and clients are a pretty tough crowd.

**YOU, TOO, HAVE A PERSONAL BRAND**

So, you never judge a book by its cover? You're way too comfortable in your own skin to worry about others' opinions? Kudos for being a highly evolved human being.

Just for grins, though, try conducting this small experiment. Take a quick glance sideways and ask yourself whether you've made any assumptions about the person sitting next to you. Be honest.

"Everyone has a personal brand.

It's not only how you view and describe yourself, it's how others perceive you," says Dan Schawbel, author of *Promote Yourself: The New*

*Rules For Career Success.*

While the term "personal brand" is relatively new, we've long been forming opinions about those we interact with—and we are more than willing to do so with very little information. Decades worth of research has shown that we make lasting judgments about others based on everything from clothing choices and posture to facial expressions and Facebook profiles.

"All of it matters," Schawbel says, "dress, body language, what you have to say, your online presence—it all adds up to the package you're communicating to others."

And while it may feel superficial (and irritating) to be concerned with whether your favorite "Growing Old Is Mandatory, But Growing Up is Optional" T-shirt is conveying the wrong idea to the office citizenry, the hard truth is that such choices can have a pretty dramatic impact on your career. To wit, York College of Pennsylvania's 2013 Professionalism Study concluded that the vast majority of 401 human resource professionals believe unprofessional appearance can have a negative effect during the hiring stage and influence your colleagues' perception of your competence.

**YOU ARE WHO YOU DISPLAY YOU ARE**

While it's inevitable that your associates and superiors will form potentially consequential opinions about you based on seemingly shallow cues, you do have some control over your brand. But when considering whether your professional image is more "unpaid intern" than "future CEO," be aware that expressing yourself through your appearance and environment is good for the soul.

"Expressing ourselves to others is important to our self-worth," says psychologist Sam Gosling,

**START NOW**  
POWER YOUR JOINTS™

"Any time we have healthier joints and connective tissues, we perform better. I believe sharing Play Again™ with fitness enthusiasts can truly help them feel their best. I take it every day, and I know it is working for me."  
Monica Brant  
2013 WBFF World Champion Pro Figure  
Age 42

**DON'T LET PAIN AND STIFFNESS SLOW YOU DOWN.**  
Overuse, aging and injury break down much-needed protective fluid in your body.

Play Again helps lubricate, hydrate and provide elasticity to joints, cartilage, tendons and ligaments.

**PLAY AGAIN™**  
75 mg  
Oral Liquid  
Non-Believe Sore and 100% Natural  
Once Tasting Oral Liquid

**PLAY AGAIN™**  
PlayAgainNow.com  
Your first order ships FREE. Use promo code **SPiRiT**.

Photo: King Lawrence (KingLawrence.com)

a researcher at The University of Texas at Austin, and author of *Snoop: What Your Stuff Says About You*. “People want to be known to others and, when they feel they are known, tend to be happier, healthier, and more productive.”

Still, it's wise to try and understand exactly *how* you are expressing yourself to your colleagues, just in case you're unwittingly doing yourself a disservice. Gosling says a person's environment reveals their personality traits through three key channels: identity claims, feeling regulators, and behavioral residue.

Identity claims are the things you deliberately show, do, and say—the characteristics you want to be known for. Does everyone in the office seek you out when hankering for delicious, freshly baked cookies? Is your *Homeland* recap the most anticipated email of the week? Or maybe your efforts to improve company-wide sustainability have

## “Ten percent of Millennials miss a job opportunity because of what they do online,” says one author.

earned you the nickname “The Green Machine.” Whatever “it” is, you put it out there intentionally, and you own it.

Feeling regulators are things like family snaps, vacation postcards, flowers from your significant other or even the smooth jazz station seeping out of your computer. These are things that, while meaningful to you, are not necessarily intended to communicate about your personality—but do nonetheless.

And then there is behavioral residue, or the inadvertent consequences of your actions that convey something about your personality. While you may not even realize it, your colleagues are forming impressions based on

“traces” of your personality found in things like a long-dead ficus tree, disheveled desk, perpetually alphabetized files, or always-fresh lipstick.

Gosling says that some personality traces “show up very strongly in spaces,” such as a person's bedroom or office. For example, in terms of the “Big Five” personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism), he says conscientiousness is easily and usually correctly associated with a tidy desk. That's a good thing, because it's in your favor to be known as the person who gets things done.

Openness is also revealed in office spaces, and Gosling says the colleague with the unusual desk, original art,

# The Perfect Landing for Skiing

## Or anything else for that matter

Nestled at the base of the Wasatch Mountains, the [Salt Lake City International Airport](#) is just 10 minutes from downtown. This allows for unprecedented access to a vibrant city for business, recreation, and everything in between.

Be a part of this unparalleled place.

With seven airlines providing over 600 daily flights, getting here couldn't be easier.



Salt Lake City  
International Airport

[www.slcairport.com](http://www.slcairport.com)

and diverse collection of books is probably a person open to new experiences “who prefers complexity, is an abstract thinker and is less concrete and conventional.” All of which are good traits to have—if his job demands them.

However, we also publicly expose less appealing traces of our personalities through our personal spaces, and sometimes

we misjudge what we see. For example, while we may rightly infer that a messy desk belongs to an unconscientious (but creative) person, we also sometimes mistakenly equate messy with being disagreeable.

These types of perceptions and misperceptions matter in the workplace, Gosling says, because a boss makes judgments and decisions

based on what she thinks people are like. If she “thinks someone is irresponsible and closed-minded, she may offer them a different assignment. We care about personality, and it’s a predictor of how we think people behave.”

#### **YOU.COM = YOU**

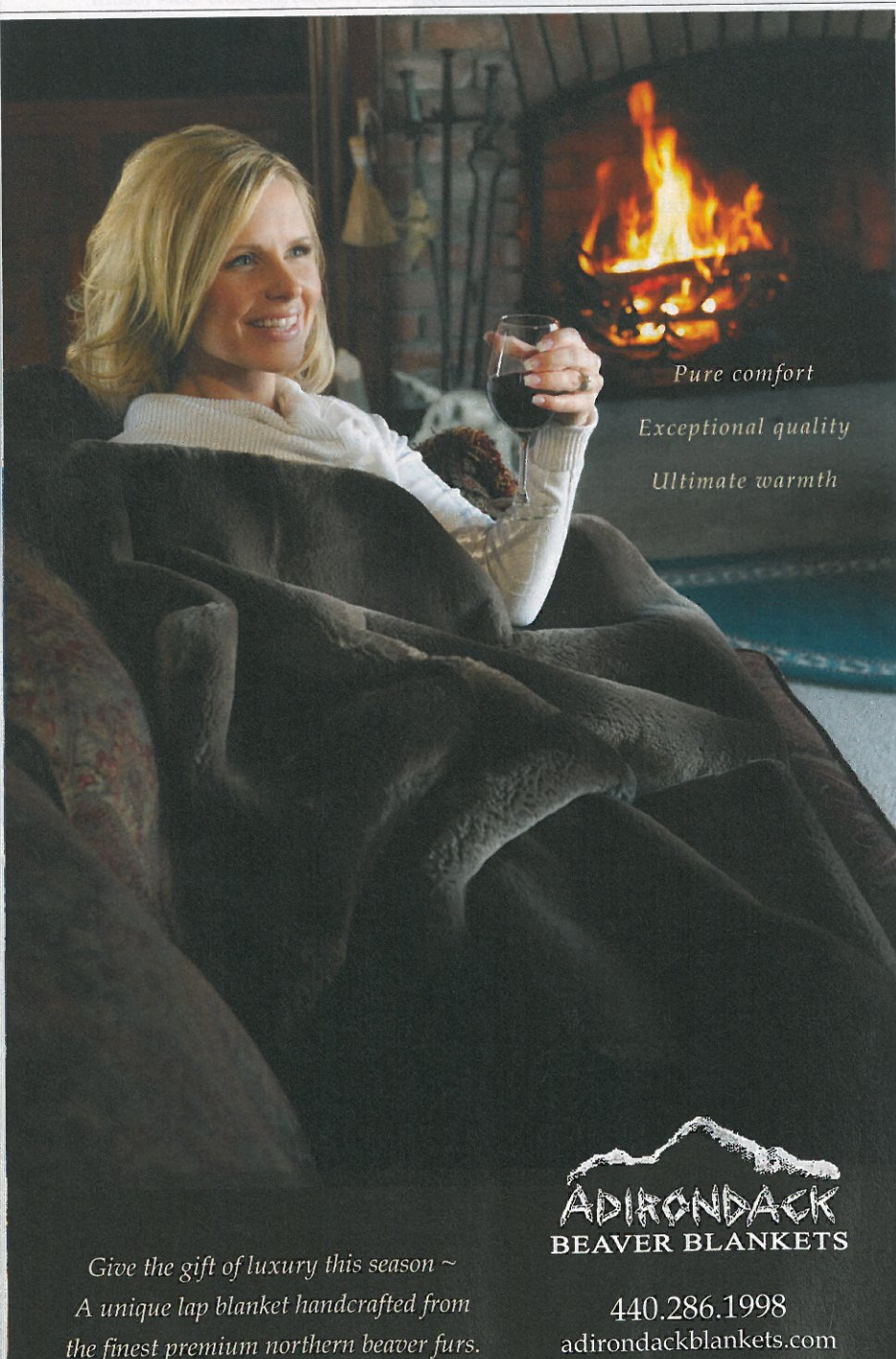
And what about our online spaces like Facebook and Twitter? Gosling says Facebook is actually a good place to learn about our peers, in part because the effort involved with creating a realistic alter ego makes it a challenge to give a false impression. In fact, he says, “the virtual world crystallizes things that would have been ephemeral” if left to be discerned from real world interactions. While a marketing colleague may have suspected you were hung-over last Friday, that forgotten late-night selfie confirmed his theory.

And don’t think that a “Tweets are my own” claim does anything to distinguish the personal you from the professional one, because businesses often consider employees an extension of their brand. In September, for example, Business Insider Chief Technology Officer Pax Dickinson found himself out of a job after being called out for racist, sexist, and otherwise offensive tweets.

Schawbel says, “The divide between work and professional life is more complicated now, and what you do outside of work affects how you’re perceived. Ten percent of Millennials miss a job opportunity because of what they do online.”

#### **HOW TO PROJECT YOUR VERY BEST YOU**

As you might imagine, a company does not undertake a rebranding initiative lightly. Years of research and untold dollars go into the process. Multiple agencies are brought in to find out things like the scope



*Pure comfort*  
*Exceptional quality*  
*Ultimate warmth*

**ADIRONDACK**  
BEAVER BLANKETS

*Give the gift of luxury this season ~  
A unique lap blanket handcrafted from  
the finest premium northern beaver furs.*

440.286.1998  
adirondackblankets.com

and character of brand recognition. They may even be asked to acquire reactions to visual stimuli with the aim of drawing salient inferences created by words and images. And stuff like that.

Sometimes, the result of all that concerted thought and effort is winning (e.g. Old Spice: No longer solely the fragrance choice of Papaws everywhere). Sometimes,

it's "meh" (e.g. Little Debbie: The new face of Swiss Rolls looks much like the old one). And other times it's definitely losing (e.g. Gap: You know it's a costly dud when the original logo returns within a fortnight).

While it's far less strenuous to develop a winning personal brand, Schawbel does recommend engaging in a four-phase

process that goes something like this: discover, create, communicate, and maintain.

First, he says, "Figure out what you want to be known for and who your audience is, and package that into a brand statement."

While determining your purpose in life is no small feat, once you've done so, it's time to carve out your niche. "Think of yourself as a product or company and create personal branding materials like a resume, cover letter, references, social network, blog or business card" that provide your audience with a cohesive "you" experience.

Schawbel says it's essential to "align your personal brand with the right career," and that authenticity needs to come through as you communicate on blogs, write articles for niche outlets, etc. Eventually, you'll enter the maintenance phase, which Schawbel describes as a "never-ending journey" of communicating on- and off-line, and being prepared to shift and change with the marketplace.

**ET TU, TELECOMMUTER**

So you're a telecommuter, or a freelancer. None of this applies to you, right? Wrong. We are our own worst critics, and research shows that if we don't look and feel professional, we're less likely to behave that way. Clothes, for example, carry a lot of symbolic weight, and pajamas don't exactly scream "success story."

All of this is not to say that you should go changing to please someone else. But there's no sense Miley Cyrusing yourself out of professional superstardom if you can help it. You've got the skills—just don't forget that a highly interactive audience is watching, and they have expectations.

*Jill Coody Smits is a Dallas-based journalist. Find her online at [blueseedcommunications.com](http://blueseedcommunications.com).*

To receive this offer on your phone text **SPiRiT** to 55678

Message + data rates may apply

**WallyPark.com**

*Premier Airport Parking.™*



**SAVE**  
*on* **YOUR**  
**ENTIRE STAY**  
(no minimum stay)

**25% OFF**

parking at ATL, DEN, LAX, EWR, PHL or SEA-TAC

**15% OFF**

parking at HOU, JAX, MCO or SAN



EXP: 6/30/14

SW

**WALLYPARK LOCATIONS:** Atlanta, Denver, Houston, Jacksonville, Los Angeles, Newark, Orlando, Philadelphia, San Diego, Seattle

Original coupon must be submitted to be redeemed. Offer subject to change without notice. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Not valid at WallyPark Express. Code: SW3000