

# First Impressions Consultant Case Studies

Read how other consultants have found a fulfilling career to suit their personal talents and objectives and to fit with their lifestyle needs.

There are many other successful consultants we could have written about but those on the following pages recently shared their success stories with others at a First Impressions Consultant Forum, so we asked them to let us share them with you too.

We hope you enjoy reading them and feel inspired to find a way of achieving your own goals within the image profession. We'll look forward to helping you along the way!



## Agnès Brown MFIC

Agnès has run her consultancy from a home studio in a Bedfordshire village since 2000. French and married to an Englishman, she has three children aged from 8 to 14. Agnès came into the Image profession from an unusual background as, prior to training with First Impressions, she pursued a career in scientific research at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School, working as a molecular biologist specialising in research into the fatal lung disease Invasive Aspergillosis.



However, the long hours and travelling meant she was not able to spend much time with her husband and two young daughters. When expecting their third child it gave Agnès cause to stop and question whether she wanted to continue with her existing lifestyle. It was a difficult decision as she loved her work as part of a professional team with a worldwide reputation but she decided to make some changes for the benefit of her family life.

When her son was only a week old, Agnès and her family moved out of London to Bedfordshire. For the first time she was able to take her children to school and feel fully involved in their lives. After about a year, however, Agnes felt she was missing out on the satisfaction and fulfilment that she had achieved that contributed to people's well-being. She then made a decision to train with First Impressions and set up her image consultancy business in 2000.

"Despite the radical change in career I still felt I had many transferable skills that I could put to good use in my image business. I have always had a passionate interest in people and through my image work I now help people feel better from the outside! Everyone can look fantastic if they understand how to select colours that harmonise with their personal colouring, styles of clothes that reflect their personality and cuts that work best with their shape and proportion."

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Agnès believes that clear determination has helped her achieve her goals and her advice for anyone running their own business is to aspire to the same high standards in your own business that you would apply to any professional career. She believes it is important to get out and make connections, in her case travelling to give talks and presentations to interested groups.

“You need to be prepared to step outside your comfort zones to promote your business and set yourself reasonable goals and then do your best to achieve them. If you are passionate about your profession you do a good job. My career as an image consultant has exceeded my expectations and enables me to lead the life I want to lead. I am able to choose where and when I work and schedule my consultations to be around for my children after school and during the holidays. I also gain immense satisfaction by helping my clients feel more confident about the way they look. I believe that creating confidence is the first step to success and from the appreciative letters received I know that I have helped clients achieve their objectives by simply being more confident in themselves. I’m fortunate to work in a profession that I am passionate about, earning good money and achieving great satisfaction”.

Agnès concentrates on personal image consultancy and one-to-one styling and coaching and was accredited as a Master of the Federation of Image Consultants in 2002. She is now part of the First Impressions Training Team, sharing her enthusiasm and passion as she helps other consultants to learn their image skills.

## Linda Balint

Linda Balint lives in Northamptonshire and trained with First Impressions in 2005. Before embarking on her image career she was employed in a demanding project management role within the financial services sector.

Linda had reached a senior level in project management but didn’t relish the thought of continuing in a similar role for the next 20 years. “It was a very difficult decision to leave an established career within a large corporate organisation but once I had made the decision to move on I immediately took action researching suitable business options. I wanted to develop a new career where I could utilise the soft skills training that I really enjoyed, involving the psychology of communication, presentation skills and body language. I wanted the opportunity to work creatively to help others build their confidence and present the best image possible”, said Linda.



Linda researched the various training options through the Federation of Image Consultants and this led to a helpful conversation with Julia Campion, Managing Director of First Impressions. She chose First Impressions for its comprehensive training programme and corporate focus and expertise.

“I run my business like a professional project and apply all the necessary marketing, sales and organisational skills to ensure I meet my objectives. I don’t say ‘yes’ to everything but instead focus on areas which will provide longer term development opportunities for my business” said Linda.

Linda has used a science-based approach to differentiate her services and her main focus is the corporate marketplace. Her business background has meant she is very comfortable with public speaking and through networking she has generated several speaking engagements at professional functions in the City. She has introduced a feedback form with a checklist of all her services so this provides immediate lead opportunities, along with a ready source of testimonials.

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“Many people approach my consultations purely from a professional perspective and view image training as just another set of skills to help move them up the career ladder. They may have innate style but this has not been developed or given priority in their busy lives”.

Linda has identified individuals with a strong synergy and has developed alliances in order to work on collaborative projects for mutual benefit. Her associate group includes a tailor, hairdresser, make-up artist, cosmetic surgeon and photographer. She also works alongside Rosemary Conley franchisees to add value to their offering by providing colour and style presentations to their regional groups. These workshops have resulted in several ‘word of mouth’ referrals and professional assignments.

“Building a successful business requires you to use the skills and training you have learnt to develop a package that works for you. It takes time to build the infrastructure and the foundations but I have no regrets about taking the decision to train with First Impressions and have found building my business a very enjoyable experience” said Linda.

## Lyn Bromley

Lyn Bromley lives with her husband and young daughter in Warwickshire and trained with First Impressions in 2004. She originally trained in finance but has worked in the field of personal development since 1989 as a trainer, consultant and project manager for a variety of organisations.

She is a busy working mother, combining her image consultancy business with a part-time project management role at a software company. Lyn feels this offers the ideal combination to make the most of her key skills and interests whilst also enabling her to look after her daughter who attends primary school. Whilst she feels she benefits from her employer’s flexibility, she also feels they benefit from her increased motivation and additional soft skills training that can be utilised in her project management role. Lyn has always had a love of fashion and clothes, although she never thought that she would be able to incorporate this personal interest into a career choice until she researched image consultancy training and decided to train with First Impressions.



“I enjoy the variety and feel my current career choice provides me with an ideal work/life balance and opportunity to develop my professional skills and personal interests. It does require good organisational skills to keep on top of my work and personal commitments and fortunately I’m the type of person that works best to plans and schedules” says Lyn. “I find it is important for me to constantly set objectives and each year I have set myself definitive goals. In my first year after training with First Impressions my aim was to pay back my training costs, which I achieved. In my second year I concentrated on developing corporate assignments by joining the First Impressions Corporate Associate network. The head office at First Impressions offers fantastic support to consultants, especially through the mentoring scheme, business network and regular forum meetings. As consultants are from such varied professional backgrounds they can offer help and advice from very different perspectives - a critical success factor”.

Lyn’s husband has been very supportive of her image business and as a client services director for an advertising agency he is a helpful sounding board for business planning, particularly in the area of presentations and marketing. Lyn finds that networking is the best way for her to develop the business and the necessary people skills suit her personality. She stresses it is important to try a variety of different groups in order to find the right fit and then to persevere and keep attending regularly in order to build effective business relationships.

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In addition to her private image consultancy work, Lyn also delivers corporate assignments in her capacity as a First Impressions Corporate Associate. She has recently joined the First Impressions Training Team and is taking her TFIC/City and Guilds Joint Award In Image Consultancy in order to qualify as a lead trainer on the full range of skills courses.

## Victoria Shepherd

Victoria trained in Image Consultancy with First Impressions in January 2006. She lives in Nottinghamshire with her husband and young family, a daughter aged 7 and son aged 3.

After studying business and finance, Victoria trained as a civil engineer and spent 4 years in this professional but eventually realised it was not for her. She then took to the skies as an air-stewardess but travel sickness unfortunately put paid to this career option.

A family relocation to Nottinghamshire necessitated a new job and she took up the reins as receptionist for a firm of property surveyors. Victoria spent several happy years at this company and worked her way up to the position of senior PA to the Chairman before taking maternity leave to have her daughter. Her firm offered her the opportunity to train as a surveyor on day release study but she didn't feel this would suit her professionally or personally at this time in her life.



Whilst on maternity leave her husband bought her a colour analysis consultation as a gift. “I really enjoyed the consultation which was a real eye-opener for me and really changed the way I viewed myself. I felt very strongly that this was information for life that I could use to my best advantage” said Victoria of the session, which was delivered by another consultant from the First Impressions network.

Although Victoria enjoyed spending a few years as a full time mum whilst her children were young, she knew that she wanted to explore new career opportunities for when both children were at school. She had a ‘light-bulb moment’ when away one year and was particularly interested in the colour and style choices of her fellow holidaymakers. On returning to the UK she researched the training options, selected First Impressions and booked a place on the intensive foundation training programme.

“The support from my husband has been invaluable as he also runs his own business and has helped with the financial and administration aspects of setting up my own consultancy. In my first year I achieved my goal, which was to recover my training costs and pay for a break away for us. My aim is to get the business established with view to developing it further when my son starts school. In the meantime I am enjoying consulting on a part-time basis and taking advantage of the additional training modules offered by First Impressions to develop my skills and knowledge”

Victoria feels that local networking has been of key importance in the development of her business and she has taken space at local gyms and events to promote her business. She has also been involved in organising a series of popular retail and therapy fundraising evenings in the local area and these have generated several consultations and colour and style evening events. She has also reaped new business from word of mouth referrals and some selective directory advertising. Victoria is concentrating for the moment on personal image consultancy and one-to-one coaching sessions, although she has also facilitated several business workshops on image management and intends to develop her corporate consultancy business in the future.

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