



Transcript – Julie Hyne and the relevance and importance of dressing for success in a post pandemic world

Helga Svendsen 0:00

So today on the take on board podcast, I'm speaking with Julie Hyne about the relevance and importance of dressing for success in a post pandemic world. And I should say that I'm not sure if we're totally in a post pandemic world yet, but we are in the post emergency, we're still in the pandemic in some ways, but how to deal with that in terms of dressing for success. So Julie, could you introduce yourself for the take on board community?

Julie Hyne 0:20

Thank you so much. Helga. It's just such a pleasure to be on your program, how would I change I am actually a presentation and personal branding mentor. So some people might call it executive stylist in terms of what do I do, I am an image consultant, essentially, and a certified image professional at that. So I had been doing this for a long time. And I consult with senior executive women, women in leadership, Women of Influence women who are in positions where they feel it's important for them to present well, to actually project the right impression. And it helps them feel confident and self assured as well.

Helga Svendsen 0:52

Excellent. Thank you. And in fact, I think you were a board member, and maybe also secretary of the professional association, I guess it is the association of image consultants, international, the Australian board,

Julie Hyne 1:03

correct. It's an international organisation. And that's where my accreditation comes from. It's a little bit like being a CPA, you know, you have to have continuing education units, or we have to do that too, which is why it is naturally deemed a profession. It's not just a hobby, and we take it very seriously. But we have various chapters all over the world. And yes, I have been on the board for the Australian chapter,

Helga Svendsen 1:23

Oh, it's interesting, normally talking about people's board experience here. And today, it's slightly different. We're talking about a subject matter expertise. But just because you are on the board, how did you find your time on the board of that professional association?

Julie Hyne 1:35

It was very interesting. And having been doing this for quite some time, the task was really to try and increase membership and try and help other consultants coming on board to really find their way and educate them. We were also doing educational presentations to present out to the whole community as well. And we're there as a sounding board for other chapters around the globe as well and to interact with them. So we do like to support each other a lot. But yes, like any other board, there are protocols involved and procedures we have to follow. And rules, we have to follow and communications and everything else. So that was there's a responsibility that goes along with that.

Helga Svendsen 2:13

Absolutely, there is so well done you on stepping up to that responsibility, because these sorts of organisations can only thrive when people do step up into them. So thank you for your service there. Before we delve into dressing for success, I always like to delve a little bit deeper about the guests that I have with me today. So can you tell me a story about young Julie that tells us a little bit about how you got to where you are today.

Julie Hyne 2:34

I had a privileged upbringing, I did go to a private girls school. And I was also a very shy person. But when I when I left school, and went to university, I really I went into the hospitality arena. And so it was very easy for me to to fall into a pattern of dressing in a professional way. So you can just put on a suit and everything's fine. Because as I was growing up as a teenager, I actually was very much into sport. I used to ride horses a lot. And so I was always in jodhpurs. And that was really easy for me. But as you start going out and going to parties and didn't know what to wear, I had no idea how to dress because that was just totally alien to me. My mother wasn't really a fashionista, she was a traditional Fletcher Jones woman. So I really had no idea. And so when I went started to work, it was very easy for me to just fit into a mold. But then I still had this problem of well, how do I dress outside of that mold. And so it was really, really challenging for me. And I've struggled with it for ages, until I actually started to get into this whole field that I'm in now. And what I did was I actually employed another image consultant to come and help me because I was this as a teenager, no older than when I was older than a teenager because I've actually sort of from university, I went straight into work. So it made it very easy for me to just, you know, fit this mold of horse riding on the weekend. Yeah, waiting for the week. And so my wardrobe is pretty set. I didn't wear uniforms, uniforms everywhere. Yeah, exactly. But it was when you had to step outside of that, that things

became a little more challenging, a little more difficult. Fashion wasn't something that I had traditionally followed. So although I was interested in it, I had no idea. I absolutely had no idea. So I had to learn. And yeah, it was it was challenging. I was always very classic, very traditional style dresser and that was the influence of my mother. So I had to learn to get out of that and to explore things in a different way. Okay, well,

Helga Svendsen 4:25

let's delve into some of that thing. And it's so interesting, even hearing your reflection about the influence of your mother. We do often hear when I'm asking people about their backgrounds, as board directors, I so often hear, unsurprisingly about the influence of their parents and family, on people getting involved in the community or getting involved in boards and governance. And of course, that influence extends to what you might wear into the boardroom of those organizations. So you're an image consultant, the take on board community are largely in the boardroom or seeking to be in a boardroom. What's your advice to them? I guess about the relevance and importance of dressing for success, you know, not quite yet. But in a pandemic world and hopefully soon to be post pandemic world.

Julie Hyne 5:08

Well, interestingly, you know, when the pandemic hits, women particularly were thrown into a little bit, and women in leadership and people in leadership generally, you know, when we were thrown into this virtual world, of having to conduct meetings online, and particularly for women who were putting on several hats throughout the day, they were homeschooling, they were trying to deal with all sorts of different things. And so the whole thing about what am I supposed to be wearing everyday? How do I present for my meetings now became very, very challenging. So I did partner with someone else. And we did a whole series of webinars on how to actually in a virtual world, how to digitize your leadership presence and actually still remain relevant, appear attractive. And I use that word very carefully, because people have different connotations of what that word attractive means. But, you know, it's about showing up with respect showing up, still well groomed, still well presented, still engaged still in that work mind set, and being able to engage the audience, irrespective of whether you have a screen in front of you or not. So we still think about the style of dress that you're wearing, even if it's from the waist up, how you accessorize yourself, how you groom yourself, the colors that you wear. Do you wear patterns? Or do you not wear patterns? What's your background look like? Is that distracting? You know, what accessories are you wearing? Are they distracting? Or are they enhancing the whole thing. So there's, there was a whole host of topics that were discussed throughout this whole webinar series, which women just flocked to, we presented to over 700 women, I think, throughout the pandemic, on this whole range of things about how to still project your executive presence when you're in a virtual world. But coming out of that into a face to more face to face world, what's happening now is that women are very confused. The dress code ethos that we all grew up with, you know, professional dress, business, casual, social, casual, etc. Has all just been thrown up in the air, and it's all falling down all over the place. So women are really a little bit unsure as to how should I dress now when I go into the boardroom?

Should I still dress professionally? Or can I afford to take it down a notch or two? And what does that look like? And body shapes change over that time too, because I've put on weight or I don't feel that my wardrobe that I have before the pandemic is truly representative of who I am now. So how do I fix that? Who am I now? So there's a whole lot of questions that women are facing for themselves. Now coming out of this, and it's very interesting to see how women are reacting to all the new season fashions that are coming through and designs that are coming through. And they're very curious and keen to try new things and to break the mold almost. So it's quite exciting. In some cases.

Helga Svendsen 7:45

Oh my gosh, there's already so much in there I want to delve into. It's so interesting. So I mean, I know for me post pandemic, as I say, hopefully, whatever phase we're in at the moment are quite post pandemic, there's certainly been changes, like you described, there was changes to what I did, and what my office looked like, for a pandemic world. You know, podcast listeners can't see behind me, Julie can right now. But you know, there's plants behind me, there's my banner behind me all of that sort of stuff, which wasn't there in 2019. I noticed. Again, ironically, I'm not doing it today. But I usually wear a lighter tarp because it contrasts more with my hair. And if you were darker things, it's hard to see that on screen. So I, you know, there are a number of things, flat shoes, I'm not sure I'll ever go back to high heeled shoes. I think I'll always remain in flat shoes. So there's some of those things, what I'm hearing is there's some of those things that now, you know, it's translating again, back to the real world or to the hybrid world, whatever it may be. So and I think I heard in there that that women are experimenting with some more interesting things. Tell me about that.

Julie Hyne 8:42

Well, they women's values have necessarily changed, but their outlooks have changed. And, you know, why am I here? And what am I doing? And I haven't had some of my clients who are in very senior roles, actually thinking about moving and they are transitioning out of their very senior roles into private consulting roles. So it's all about the work life balance. It's all about what am I doing? What's my focus? Where am I going? They have families, so it's about feeling like they're doing something of value with their lives. They also want to feel like themselves, whatever that might be. They want to get out of a rut, get out of a style rut, get out of a traditional mold. And so they are, you know, they're willing to try their boat, they want to see what's possible with their bodies and the work that they're doing and the people that they interact with. It really does open up doors to a lot of different things. And we will always still work with the traditional dress codes because for some industries, they are still very necessary because we're talking about respect, we're talking about predictability, we're talking about trust and reliability. You know, when people go into those industries, that's what they expect to see because that's what they represent. So we have to be very careful that we don't try and break the molds where they need to be set in a certain way. But then again, there are rules to make To be broken, I always tell my clients, firewalls that they are. Right, we can break them. But we've carefully, you know, so that it looked really great.

Helga Svendsen 10:09

Interesting. Okay. So again, I'm hearing in there, there are still some industries, you know, those, as you said, a bit more traditional, it sounds to me like there's those industries that still have a uniform, not an actual uniform, but essentially,

Julie Hyne 10:20

The legal profession, the finance industry, in some of those very high net worth, you know, organizations, you know, where you would still expect to see people dressing in a certain way. But there's a lot more creative as you now that is still showing down through the ranks. And you'll see, look, there are some very, very senior people in large organizations that totally break the mold. You know, they, I have one client who works for a very large global organization, and she's a director who looks after the whole southern region. And she just said, I can't do I can't do this, wearing jeans to work, Joy, I just can't do it. It's coming from the top, the CEOs doing it so much that I just can't do it. I can't go beyond business casual, what's in my head is business casual, this works fine. You have to do what's comfortable for you, and what gives you the confidence and ability to do what you do. And it's interesting, isn't it. So it sounds like things have broadened the choice in a way has broadened, totally divergent and things, you know, hate to be in HR. Right now, because there's a whole lot of things which are being challenged when it comes to what was acceptable, or what was previously unacceptable is now potentially acceptable, you know, when it comes to what you wear when you go to the office.

Helga Svendsen 11:29

So interesting. And I wonder if that broadening out in some ways, and we mentioned this very briefly, before we hit record, in some ways, this topic makes me a little bit uncomfortable. Because it's, you know, you said you use the word attraction, attractive, sorry, very advisedly. And I totally get the format in which you're using it. But it can be seen as you know, you need to look a particular way, you have to wear the uniform, basically the informal uniform. But it's interesting, because what I'm hearing is, the uniform is now much broader, in a way and we can experiment more. But yeah, I'd be interested in your views around both of those things there. I guess, one, you know, as women is this just yet another thing we have to spend more hard work on much more hard work than the bloke putting his suit on? And what is this increased creativity mean for us?

Julie Hyne 12:14

Okay, well, does it create more work? No, I don't believe it does create more work, because you are a self respecting individual, you would have some sense of self respect and pride and to know that when you leave the house, or when you're meeting someone that you're going to be meeting them on the same level where you've taken a certain amount of time to dress yourself, bring yourself

present yourself, so that you present an attractive image. Now, I use that word very carefully. Because if you want to have a pleasant experience, when you meet someone, and you want them to have a pleasant experience of you, it goes against the grain, if you wouldn't take the time and effort to present yourself in a way which is going to give the other person a pleasurable experience, or I shouldn't say so no, I don't think anyone is going to the only time when it's going to trouble them. And they are going to take more time and putting themselves together as if they don't have the pieces in the wardrobe that helps them put together a look which they feel comfortable and authentic. And this is where we're at the crossroads. Because what's in wardrobes from post pandemic now doesn't necessarily fit the bill for women and in some cases, men to how they feel they want to present themselves now, because complacency has stepped in because standards have relaxed because everything has changed. And people got very used to dressing down. Were getting back heavier when we used to come home from being out to work and racing around and traveling or whatever. And we get home and the first thing you do is you get out of your work clothes or shade you put on something really nice and relaxing in your home environment. And that just allowed you to relax. But over the pandemic, everyone, not very many continued to dress in work clothes to work from home, they dressed in their relaxing at home attire, which for some people made it very challenging for them to actually perform at the same level. So whilst they got used to dressing that way, now, getting out of that habit to dress again, to go out to do face to face meetings is extremely challenging. They're going hang on a second. This is interesting. I don't feel comfortable getting into that very structured suit anymore. I don't feel comfortable putting on a jacket anymore. How can I do this so that I'm still looking businesslike and professional, but I'm not looking quite a character or not feeling like I'm out of character. So it's about trying to mix it up. It's about trying to repurpose what you've had before, and therefore into something that you represent now. Or even if you've changed position, your roles and responsibilities might have changed so you can afford to dress in a slightly different way. You can maybe add some more color into wardrobe you can relax the styles a little bit they don't have to be quite so structured, not so formal. So there's a whole lot of things which people can think about changing or modifying in how they dress but still look smart still look presentable, still look attractive still look yesterday respectful at the meeting. I think that's the key. The other question you were asking me was about? Is it going? What was the other question? You were gonna ask him about increased creativity, I guess. Yeah, yes. And that's, that's the exciting thing, because your traditional professional work, where was the darker that cooler colors, crisp white shirt, you know, a little bit of contrast, look, that's still relevant, it's still very relevant, that I think there's a lot more personality that can be injected into the way people dress for business now, which is, I think, aligns itself with this whole movements of different job roles, and people moving out of one role into another, and going out of corporate employment into private consulting. And there's just a whole lot of stuff going on out there. So it is all about projecting your personal brand, so that you can really come across as being credible confidence, almost like you're a magnet to other people, because that's what it's all about, isn't it? It's about differentiating yourself and making yourself stand out. So we get noticed for the right reasons, it makes perfect sense. You know, and it's great to hear I think that there is that increased creativity, it's the sort of thing that once it's put in front of you like, Oh, dear, of course, you know, there is now different expectations that is much wider lens of expectation for one of a better word or uniforms, or whatever it may be that is available to people, you know, I for women as well, because there's there are always those very stereotypical type looks. And you know, we can move away from those a little bit and become a little bit more comfortable in the way.

Helga Svendsen 16:23

Yeah, it gives more flexibility around that, that this part of the pandemic that we're in allows greater flexibility. So I think what I'm hearing is, it's opportune in a way because there is greater flexibility around that there is more range in the inverted commas, the uniforms that are available. And therefore it's an opportunity for people to really review their own personal brand, their own personal preferences in that, how did you put it the things that make them feel credible and confident. And then I think what I'm hearing then is then review what you've got, have a look in the wardrobe review, what you've learned,

Julie Hyne 16:52

that's the most painful thing for some of my clients, too, is because they just hit a roadblock, and they just look in their water, and they say, Who was this person, you know, that I don't associate with that anymore. And so some of them have have a real transformation process they have to go through to actually start to identify who they are now, and what really is important to them now, and that reflects in how they want to dress right down to the type of fabrics they were, you know, sort of the care factor of clothes that they have in their wardrobe, the ease of coordination, and you know, how many clothes they need in their wardrobe.

Helga Svendsen 17:25

Again, it's interesting, the great resignation for people in their careers and that greater flexibility to move around. It sounds like some some of those principles could also be applied to the wardrobe. And what do you need to resign from the wardrobe?

Julie Hyne 17:36

Totally, absolutely. You know, because women just I speak on behalf of women, because they are predominantly my clients. But women have struggled for so long in dressing for work dressing for the boardroom, because it's very easy for them to just disappear. It's very easy for them to just get swallowed up in a whole room full of seats. Yeah. So how do they dress in a way that gives them that confidence that helps them look like they hold some authority and, you know, really projects their knowledge and experience so that they stand taller, they get more they get listened to. And you know, they can have a presence. But that's what it's all about. Because too often I've heard them complain about feeling irrelevant, feeling old fashioned, feeling drab, feeling ineffectual. These are all the sorts of words that they use to describe how they felt about how they were dressing. So it's about finding their space, finding their uniqueness, and allowing them and me finding the special pieces for them to have that really differentiates them, and helps them identify with themselves. And they are. Yes, that's right. Allow them to shine.

Helga Svendsen 18:41

Oh, Julie, fabulous conversation here. What are the key things you want people to take away from the conversation that we've had today,

Julie Hyne 18:48

I think is Don't close your mind off to the opportunities and the possibilities of what are really strategically prepared. wardrobe and parents can do for you. Because it is really, really competitive out there. Probably even more so now because of the great resignation, because there's so much movement going on, that you only get. And that's an old cliché, saying, but you, you only get a few seconds to make a great impression. And that will never change because we are very visual creatures. We do notice things visually before we actually take on board any other information. So you can actually do an awful lot for yourself by you know how you dress is part of the whole personal branding package. How you package yourself. It's like when you receive a gift. No, and it's in a box and it's beautifully wrapped. It's got a beautiful bow on it. It's like you're so excited to see what's underneath that and what's in that box. Well, it's the same thing when you're meeting people. Why should they not? Oh my goodness, what a what a wonderful experience to meet you and then get to know you. And that's what it's all about. If you receive something and it's really horribly presented in you really just want to put it to one side and you don't necessarily want to engage with the law. And it's no different when we're measuring people as examiner's line. So do consider how you dress, do you consider that this can be a representation of you as a person, your values, your brand and what's important to you? And that will attract the right people into your space?

Helga Svendsen 20:15

And is there a resource you would like to share with the take on board community? Well, I do have a, I do have a webinar, which I, which I share which women can go through, and that is, you know, how to dress the boardroom success, you know, the frustration and stress of having to do it all by yourself, I think I might have given you that link that you can share with your community or they can go to my website, they can read through my website and all the wonderful things that I do.

Well, look, we'll put a link to both of those things in the show notes. So I'll link to the webinar and a link to your website so people can easily track you down. Julie, thank you so much for taking the time to share some of your wisdom with the take on board community today. We really appreciate it both in terms of the wisdom and being able to touch briefly on your board experience as well. So thank you so much for taking the time today.

Julie Hyne 20:58

You're very welcome. Thank you. How are you? It was a pleasure.