

# Got It, Flaunt It?

KNOW WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE BETWEEN SUBTLY SEXY AND SLEAZY.

sex appeal? Is using it in a professional setting a smart use of your assets, or just risky business?

"Women should carefully judge those times when they want their sex appeal to be noticed," suggests Gallant, who has built a \$500,000 business in a few short years. "Pay attention to how others are responding to your appeal. Know and understand your audience."

Gallant warns that if your sex appeal distracts people's attention from your capabilities and work, your business—and reputation—can suffer. Overall, she does believe it's OK to use sex appeal in business dealings—you just have to be smart about it. If you go for sexiness in a work environment, she suggests subtlety. "Whispering sexy has a far more dramatic effect than screaming it at the top of your lungs," she explains.

Gallant also believes your industry can determine expectations for the way you should present yourself. Since she works in the world of entertainment and fashion, she feels comfortable expressing herself through fashion. But women in more conservative industries, she says, should probably take a more conservative approach to sexiness.

On the other hand, Dianna Booher, author of *Communicate with Confidence* and *Speak with Confidence*, sees using sex appeal as a potential liability. "Women flaunt their sexuality when they lack authority to support their point of view. It's a power play that often backfires after the emotion of the moment has subsided," she says. "Using your femininity to get attention is one thing; using it as your power base for the long term weakens your authority and credibility."

**KNOWING YOUR** strengths and weaknesses is an important part of being a successful entrepreneur. So says Maggie Gallant, 26, founder of Spotlight Communications, a New York City-based full-service boutique PR firm. But what

if one of your assets is

Booher suggests that female entrepreneurs use their attractiveness, not sexuality, in business. "Studies show that anyone who is considered attractive—male or female—has an advantage. Other people think they're brighter [and] more interesting. Attractiveness includes appearance, dress, mannerisms, social manners and personality. Use these attributes to the max."

Says Gallant, "Sex appeal is something that lies within every woman. It's not just for the women on the covers of *Playboy*. This has nothing to do with sleeping your way to the top—an obvious don't."

Is age a factor in a woman's comfort level with using sex appeal in business? Booher thinks so. "Sex appeal diminishes at some age—for some sooner than others—and it is no longer an op-



**Be the judge:** "Women should carefully judge those times when they want their sex appeal to be noticed," says Maggie Gallant.

tion for winning business. Younger women in their early 20s do not have the experience to know future problems that the 'sex appeal' approach leads to—huge career barriers and limitations, should they become known for [using] such an approach."

Gallant believes that older women know the difference between drawing people in with sex appeal vs. flaunting it and alienating others. She thinks that maturity can influence how a woman uses her sex appeal. "In general, when older women use their sex appeal successfully, it's in a subtle, more experienced way. Women who have been in business for a longer period of time know better when it's appropriate and when it's not."

ALIZA PILAR SHERMAN ([www.mediaegg.com](http://www.mediaegg.com)) is an author, freelance writer and speaker specializing in women's issues.

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