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Visible Woman: Author/Speaker Guru Robyn Hatcher

By Gerit Quealy Published Jun 24, 2013



I often hear the lament that women over a certain age feel invisible. But there are a lot of women out there showing up, doing their thing, and making their mark in highly visible ways.

Case in point: Author and speaker coach Robyn Hatcher. She gave us some great advice on *how important* your voice is to your personal style. She's been coaching others on how to best present themselves for over a dozen years as a voice, speech, and presentation coach at **SpeakEtc**.

And she just distilled her accumulated wisdom into a new book, ***Standing Ovation Presentations***, which helps you identify your personal speaking style and hone it to perfection.

Hatcher has a section in her book called the Wardrobe Department, which addresses issues of style for speaking in public (American's #1 fear!). But we asked 10 questions about her personal style which you might find easily adaptable to your own.

What's the biggest grooming mistake women make professionally? Too much or not enough makeup. A recent study said that women who wear makeup at work were more respected than those who didn't. Of course there's a *big* difference between work-appropriate makeup and nightclub makeup.

Do you have any rules for professional dressing? Dress to *express* rather than *impress*. Women, more so than men, tend to look at what other people are wearing or what magazines are selling, then they run out and buy that just to fit in, even if it does nothing for them. I'm not only talking about whether or not a style flatters your figure but whether it flatters your "personal brand."

In my book I talk a lot about discovering your *unique* communication style, what I term ActorTypes. If your communication style and personal brand comes off more like a Hero, but you're dressing like an Ingenue, there's a disconnect because people are heavily influenced by what they see.

Can you describe your personal style? I'm a major shopaholic; I like to play with a lot of different styles, but there are common themes which could translate into a personal style: Bright colors, and fabrics and cuts that flow. My ActorType is a cross between

Hero and Buddy, so I like mixing hard and soft. With a form-fitting business dress, I'll be sure to throw on a soft, flowing sweater. I usually pair jeans or slacks with a colorful silk or rayon top. I'm addicted to drape neck and V-neck tops. I replaced suit jackets with vivid drapery sweaters; *if* I wear a jacket, it will be a bright color or pattern, or the collar will have curves instead of hard edges.

Do you have a go-to outfit? Yes, for the season and the occasion. For leading training workshops, I have a favorite pair of Ann Taylor black slacks that I pair with various sleeveless satin-finish V-necks or drape neck blouses. For presentations, I have a couple of fuchsia & orange patterned dresses that are my fallbacks. For social occasions, I have a really fun '60s-style green print dress and a black drape-necked jumpsuit that I can pretty much always rely on. So much depends on mood though! There are times you can put on a favorite outfit and it will feel/look all wrong. My favorites usually have a 2-season life expectancy before are replaced by something else.

What do you schlub around in? In summer, my capri jeans are the first thing I reach for. If I'm in *total* schlub mode, I'll throw on baggy cotton drawstrings and some old castoff T-shirt of my son's. I often ask myself "What would Stacy [London, *above left*] and Clinton [Kelly] (of *What Not to Wear*) say? But even when I *know* they would say toss it out or don't you dare walk out the house... I don't listen.

Do you worry about your hair? My hair is definitely my Achilles heel. My mother always complained about my hair, that "it had a mind of it's own"— I have internalized that. No matter how fabulous my hair might look at home, by the time I get to where I'm going it usually looks completely different — and not in a good way. Also, when I use a technique or product that makes it look fantastic one time, the next time I use the *same* technique or product, I don't get the same result. For African American women, hair always has its challenges: to go natural or have it straightened. What most people don't realize is that we can have different textures of hair on the same head which is my problem and one reason I won't go natural. Right now, I know I need a snazzy, easy to work haircut and hair care regimen but I am too SCARED to trust anyone to do it. Soooo if any great stylist are reading this, please contact me!!

Do you have a makeup "style"? I love my eyes and always play them up. A favorite movie line from *The Prince and the Showgirl*: Dame Edith Evans tells Marilyn Monroe: "*When a girl is young, she should wear lots of mascara. And when she is older, she should wear lots more.*" I love mascara and eyeliner pencil and dark eye-shadow in the eye creases, with highlighter under the brow. Lately, I've been dialing back my makeup though because sometimes I can go overboard; I don't want to look like a woman who's trying too hard or holding on to the habits of her youth. I sometimes wear foundation but *always* use concealer under my eyes, a little blush and of course lipstick, which are either bright pinks and oranges, or browns and golds. I'm in a bright phase right now.

Do you have a skin care routine? I'm a skin care fanatic. I will try anything if it promises results and am not faithful to one thing.

Do you have a "secret" cosmetic trick? I've learned a lot of tricks from sitting in

makeup chairs as an actress. A really good one: How to even out the size of my eyes — put liner inside the rim of the larger eye's lower lid and below the rim of the smaller one.

Favorite thing to wear (clothing or jewelry)? EARRINGS. Never leave home without them. I have hundreds of pairs. At the end of a semester-long class I taught once, one of my students told me she noticed that I never wore the same pair of earrings twice and that they always matched what I was wearing. That made me smile. I'm also into necklaces now — the bigger the better.

Finding your own personal style and feeling confident about it is a big step toward feeling comfortable being a Visible Woman. You've been through too much to be invisible now.

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