

Business Small business

This was published 9 years ago

What your work clothes say about you

What constitutes dressed for success in the modern workplace?

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September 10, 2014 – 1:12pm

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They say it takes about seven seconds to make an impression. Stained lapels will never be forgotten.

That's the message from corporate image and fashion experts, who say that our work clothes make or break our chances of professional success.

"It is often said one should dress for the job they want, not the job they have," says Skyler McCurine, personal stylist and founder of Le Red Balloon.

"This is backed by research. Kellogg School of Management published a study on encllothed cognition proving that clothing impacts not just our mood but our behaviour.

"What this means is that if you want a senior position at your firm, dressing the part will enable you to feel more confident and in turn cause you to act confidently."



Imogen Lampport: daggy dressers do themselves no favours.

Is your wardrobe guilty of these common corporate fashion crimes? If so, it may be time to revamp.

No end to the '80s

If you are still clocking-on wearing your drop-waisted twin-set, your career is in trouble.

Imogen Lampport from Inside Out Style Blog says a wearer of dated clothes is "out of touch with what is going on" and views work as unimportant.

"Their ideas are not current and they find change in the workplace difficult," she says.

"They also may not value their work and may prefer not to be in their role as they don't place any value on updating their work wardrobe."

Ill-fitting threads

Are your work clothes sometimes a little too tight? Or perhaps you reach for old favourites you wore before you lost 15kg last summer?

Poorly fitting clothes can jeopardise careers as they can suggest the wearer is unrealistic (if wearing too-small clothes) or unconfident and trying to hide (if wearing oversized clothes).

Correctly sized clothes can create huge benefits for wearers, says Melanie Townson from online tailor Suit Me Up.

"Studies show when you are wearing a bespoke suit, people perceive you to be more confident, successful, flexible, and a higher earner and as we all know, first impressions are difficult to change."

Too much information

Workplaces can be pretty staid places, right? So is it OK to wear our laiciest knickers to our boardrooms? Yep. Just as long as nobody else knows.

Everything we choose to wear “expresses who we are and how we do or don’t want to fit into the workplace”, explains Lampport.

That’s why visible underwear (think: black bra under white shirt, or frills poking from slacks’ waists) tells the world you feel constrained by your workplace and probably have one foot out the door.

“[It sends a message] that the environment is too conservative for you and you’d rather be somewhere more creative.”

Way-too-casual

Do you work in one of those funky workplaces where every day is Casual Friday? If you don’t, do you choose to wear work clothes with the littlest formality possibility? You value comfort over anything else and the message your low-key ensemble sends the boss is you are in cruise mode, Lampport says.

Employees who dress this way “are unlikely to be very ambitious or want to get the top job,” she says.

Jennie Geisker, founder and director of Geisker Shirts, thinks casual attire in the workplace can work “if everyone is on the same page”.

“I would love to walk around with red cards on Casual Fridays,” says the Perth-based online trader, referencing her experience of working with a colleague in her 20s who, Monday-to-Thursday dressed professionally for a corporate environment but, come Friday, wore her nightclub outfits to the office including gaping cowl-neck tops.

“I cringed every time I walked past her and felt terribly sorry for her peers, especially the males.”

Dirty clothes

You don’t need to be a style guru or future-mogul to know this is uncool.

Stained work clothes and/or unclean and scuffed shoes, creased business shirts and pants scream “I don’t care about my appearance”, which can translate to “I don’t care about my work”.

This may be because said-worker only wants to be judged on work performance, which is fair enough.

But the fact is human beings are hardwired to assess based on visual impressions, and bosses usually see dirty duds as poor representation of their businesses.

Stuck on replay

Do you wake up and automatically reach for your “blue suit” because it is Tuesday? When is the last time you spiced up your 9-to-5 garb by wearing a new colour or quirky accessory?

Repetitive corporate dressing can leave our employers thinking if our wardrobes are stuck in automatic pilot mode then our work ethic may also be stuck in a rut.

“The most common dress habits I continually see are people that dress in a routine,” McCurine says.







“When you are drab, especially in a creative field, position, or industry, this speaks volumes.”

McCurine says “dressing up and looking put together” shows respect to the environment you are in.

“It means your audience, co-workers and associates are worth dressing up for.”

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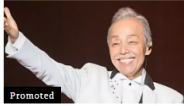
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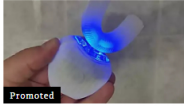
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