

Title:

A Clothes Encounter In The Business World

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Summary:

Follow these professional business attire tips for both men and women because we are judged by the way we dress.

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business, clothing, clothes, etiquette, manners, attire, men, women, dress, suite, rules, appearance, conservative

Article Body:

Do you ever wonder where all the dress rules have gone? Depending on when and where you are on any given business day, the words "distant past" might come to mind. It's difficult to decide if people don't know what to wear to work or if they have lost sight of the relevance of appearance to professional success.

The Queen of England is reported to have told Prince Charles, "Dress gives one the outward sign from which people can judge the inward state of mind. One they can see, the other they cannot." Clearly, she was saying what many people are reluctant to accept; that people judge us by the way we dress. In all situations, business and social, our outward appearance sends a message.

Try going to a busy restaurant at lunchtime. Look around you at what people are wearing and see if you don't make judgments about who they are, their line of business, their personalities and their competencies. Think about how you feel when you are dressed in your usual business attire as opposed to casual dress. Your choice of business apparel speaks to your professional behavior and credibility. It is important to understand how to dress for business if you wish to promote yourself and your organization in a positive manner,

How you dress depends on four factors: the industry in which you work, the job you have within that industry, the geographic area in which you live; and most importantly, what your client expects to see.

Professional Dress for Men

In men's clothing, fashion does not change significantly from season to season

but business attire is about being professional and not about being fashionable. It's about presenting yourself in a way that makes your clients feel comfortable and confident with you. Dressing for success is still the rule. The professional businessman should keep in mind these few points when deciding what to wear to work.

Choose a conservative suit in navy, black or gray either pinstripe or solid. The quality of the material speaks as loudly as the color and can make the difference between sleaze and suave.

A solid white or blue dress shirt with long sleeves offers the most polished look. The more pattern and color you add, the more the focus is on your clothing, rather than your professionalism.

Ties should be made of silk or a silk-like fabric. Avoid the cartoon characters and go for simple and subtle if you want to enhance your credibility.

Socks should be calf-length or above. Make sure they match not only what you are wearing, but also each other. A quick glance in good light before heading out the door can save embarrassment later in the day. Check for holes as well if you'll be going through airport security and removing your shoes.

Shoes should without question be conservative, clean and well polished. Lace-up shoes are the choice over slip-ons or flip flops. Don't think for a minute that people don't notice shoes. Many people will look at your feet before your face.

Belts need to match or closely coordinate with your shoes. Once again, quality counts.

Keep jewelry to a minimum. In a time when men sport gold necklaces, bracelets and earrings, the business professional should limit himself to a conservative watch, a wedding band and maybe his college ring.

Personal hygiene is part of the success equation. Freshly scrubbed wins out over heavily fragranced any day of the week. Save the after-shave for after hours, but never the shave itself.

The finishing touch for the business man is his choice of accessories: briefcase, portfolio and pen. When it comes to sealing the deal, a top of the line suit, a silk tie and a good pair of leather shoes can lose their affect when you pull out the ball point pen you picked up in the hotel meeting room the day before.

Professional Dress for Women

When women entered the workplace in the 1970's and 1980's in greater numbers than ever before and began to move into positions which had traditionally been held by men, many of them believed that they needed to imitate male business attire. The result was women showing up at the office in skirted suits or coordinated skirts and jackets with tailored blouses finished off with an accessory item that looked very much like a man's tie. Happily those days are gone. While the business woman may now wear trousers to work, she does it out of a desire to appear professional and at the same time enjoy the flexibility and comfort that pants offer over skirts. Her goal is no longer to mirror her male colleagues.

The same overall rules apply to women's work attire as apply to men's. Business clothing is not a reflection of the latest fashion trend. A woman should be noticed for who she is and her professional skills rather than for what she wears. Her business wear should be appropriate for her industry and her position or title within the industry.

Start with a skirted suit or pants suit for the most conservative look. A skirted suit is the most professional. With a few exceptions, dresses do not offer the same credibility unless they are accompanied by matching jackets.

Skirts should be knee-length or slightly above or below. Avoid extremes. A skirt more than two inches above the knee raises eyebrows and questions.

Pants should break at the top of the foot or shoe. While Capri pants and their fashion cousins that come in assorted lengths from mid-calf to ankle are the latest trend, they are out of place in the conservative business environment.

Blouses and sweaters provide color and variety to woman's clothing, but they should be appealing rather than revealing. Inappropriate necklines and waistlines can give the wrong impression.

Women need to wear hose in the business world. Neutral or flesh-tone stockings are the best choices. Never wear dark hose with light-colored clothing or shoes. Keep an extra pair of stockings in your desk drawer unless the hosiery store is next door or just down the street from the office.

Faces, not feet, should be the focal point in business so choose conservative shoes. A low heel is more professional than flats or high heels. In spite of current fashion and the sandal rage, open-toed or backless shoes are not office attire. Not only are sandals a safety hazard, they suggest a certain official agenda.

When it comes to accessories and jewelry, less is once again more. Keep it simple: one ring per hand, one earring per ear. Accessories should reflect your personality, not diminish your credibility.

Business attire is different from weekend and evening wear. Investing in a good business wardrobe is an investment in your professional future. For those who think it's not what you wear but who you are that creates success, give that some more thought. Business skills and experience count, but so does personal appearance and that all-important first impression.

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