

# Dress for Success

There's No Harm in Taking Cues From 'In' Fashions, but Keep Work Wear Appropriate

By Angela Ambrosini-Haliski

The road to success isn't hidden behind your closet door paved with Prada shoes and Brooks Brothers' button-downs. The power to achieve your ambitions comes from within. Nevertheless, if you want to be successful, it can't hurt to start dressing the part.

In today's work environment, appearance is essential when presenting yourself as a strong and professional employee. First impressions are crucial and have a significant effect on how you feel about yourself. So if you want that raise or promotion or you are on the job hunt, here are some tips to help you look your best.

When choosing *where* to shop, remember that dressing for success doesn't have to be expensive. Almost every store — from H&M to Armani — offers basic men's and women's fashions that can be assembled into winning outfits. The more expensive the store, the higher-quality materials you'll be investing in, but as far as styles go, you won't be skimping much.

Another important factor to consider is your body type. Try to flatter your

in the way you dress goes a long way in establishing trust and credibility with all your business contacts."

Maintaining a professional yet stylish look means balancing the types of outfits a person in your industry would expect with some personal expression thrown in for good measure. For example, this year's summer fashions include an explosion of color, exotic fabrics and textures all drenched in international flavors. Elegant tunics, sultry linens and silks are being blended with haute couture and a bit of shabby chic. Both men and women can use these elements to add a touch of style to their work wardrobe without overdoing it. Use stand-out colors and fabrics to add a splash of personal style.

For women, blazers mixed and matched with trousers are simple and mean business. Wear complementary colors, subtle and neat, while adding accessories such as a handbag or a scarf to complete the look. Never go too low cut or too short.

For men, suit-wearing has gotten more creative in recent years. Mixing and matching suit jackets with trousers is one way to stay professional yet trendy. Explore a variety of colors and



**Finishing Touch:** Women can complete their professional look with a complementary handbag

body with an appropriate style. Clothes need to be fitted to your specific size and shape more than they have to follow the latest looks. Although many businesses today have adopted a casual work environment, it is still important to dress for the position you want, not the one you have.

In her book "Ready to Wear: An Expert's Guide to Choosing and Using Your Wardrobe" (Perigee Books, \$16.95, 304 pages), author and fashion expert Mary Lou Andre states, "Appropriate dress is clothing that fits neatly into your work environment and will carry you through to meetings, lunches or any other activities you have planned for the day. No matter what day of the week or what industry you're in, consistency

fabrics. Wearing dark socks with elegant and playful cuffs is another creative idea.

"Pay attention to detail, it's that significant," Andre says. Dark colors provide a sense of professionalism and are always impressive. If you choose to add color, do it in a way so that you stand out but never like a sore thumb. Also, always have your clothes tailored. You don't want to drag yourself into any professional environment.

"Think of your clothes as tools to help you achieve your goal," Andre says. Start making your clothes work for you. ■

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