

## **Dress to Impress** **Randy Siegel**

When I ask workshop participants to name three components of professional image, their first response is almost always dress. Clothes may not make the businessperson, but clothes *do* create first impressions that can make or break careers.

Here are tips on how to dress to impress.

### **For Both Businesswomen and Men**

1. Pay particular attention to your shoes. Believe it or not, they are often the first thing that people notice about us. Few things create worse impressions than scuffed or poorly maintained shoes.
2. Almost as important as the clothes you wear are the way they fit. Find a seamstress or tailor you trust.
3. When presenting, always dress one step up from your audience. Your mother was right: it's always better to be overdressed than underdressed.
4. Take good care of your clothes. Make sure they are dry-cleaned and pressed.
5. Avoid colognes or perfumes in the workplace.
6. Get in shape. Research shows that those who are in good physical shape demand higher credibility and authority. If you are overweight, look for clothes that flatter and that don't accentuate problem areas.
7. Smile often. Consider whitening your teeth. This process is easy and inexpensive these days.
8. Own at least one suit that you have deemed your "power suit." Wear it when you could use a burst of confidence such as for an important presentation, job interview, or performance review.
9. Do not dress casually for a job interview or promotion, no matter how casual a prospective company's office environment may appear.

10. Look around the office and see how your bosses are dressed. Find role models who are company stars.

## **For Businesswomen**

1. Skirt length should be just above the knee, to the knee, or slightly below. Skirts that come to the ankle are appropriate only when they are in style. Often women ask me about pants; pants are acceptable in the workplace.
2. Jackets add authority; suits add even more authority. Avoid wearing dresses when authority is important to you.
3. Blouses should be cotton or silk and should be white, or some other light color.
4. Select suit colors that make you look and feel attractive. If you are unsure what those are, consult with a color expert.
5. Match shoes to your outfits. Avoid open-toed shoes and very high heels.
6. Keep jewelry simple. Avoid multiple earrings, rings, and bracelets.
7. As you approach your forties and fifties, your facial coloring may change. Consult a makeup expert and consider coloring your hair. Makeup and hair color should be soft and natural.
8. Save cutesy (those Santa Claus sweaters), sexy (miniskirts or low-cut and see-through blouses), and flashy clothes (sequins) for your off hours.
9. Opt for a briefcase rather than a purse.
10. Pay attention to your nails. Get a manicure.

## **For Businessmen**

1. Your power suit should be navy. This is a classic. Wear it with a white shirt. Gray suits are an ideal second choice, as is a blue oxford cloth shirt.
2. Avoid excessive jewelry. One ring and a watch. Save bracelets, chains, and flashy cufflinks for the weekend.
3. A wing-collared shirt is considered more formal than a buttoned-down shirt.
4. Sport a contemporary, conservative hairstyle without gels. Rarely have I seen a man with dyed hair who didn't look like he dyed his hair.
5. Your socks should match your suit or slacks.

6. Researchers have reported that more than seventy percent of interviewers and top management do not approve of heavy facial hair. Shave every day.
7. Business casual should be dress pants or khakis, no jeans. Wear a collared shirt. Keep a blazer at work in case an unexpected event pops up. A navy blue blazer will give you increased authority.
8. Avoid garish, themed, or cutesy ties. Purchase only silk ties.
9. Watch your grooming. Trim your nails and make sure they are clean. Trim nose and ear hair.
10. Your belt should match the color and finish of your shoes. For example, shiny black shoes require a shiny black belt. On the average you will want to purchase a belt that is a size larger than your waist. Keep buckles simple.