

Business Dress and Advice on Behaviour in the Workplace for Women of all Ages

Fashion often dictates what women should wear in a season and the designers can offer very creative choices. However, your employer and your clients/ customers may expect you to appear more conservative with a simple style rather than be dressed in the latest fashion.

Whether or not your employing organisation provides a uniform consider the following points before reading dress rules.

1. What product or service does the business offer?
2. What is the image of the business?
3. Is it important for you that you and your work are taken seriously?
4. Is it important to you that you are seen as trustworthy?
5. Do you see yourself as a professional no matter what your position is in the organisation?
6. What age groups are the clientele/ customers of the business?
7. Have you been promoted to a management level from a group in which you worked?

Some people say that rules are there to be broken, but doing that in the business world in regards to how you present yourself will affect how you are perceived by your employer, employees, colleagues, clients and customers. This in turn will impact on your reputation and the reputation of the employing organisation or your own company.

Your chances of promotion may also be adversely affected. Flamboyant or messy dressing can make you appear a flippant person who wants all the attention on themselves or as an individual who doesn't pay enough attention to detail. It is important that you always remember how your non verbal and verbal communication is going to be perceived by others.

Basic Business Dress Rules

1. Dress appropriately for the organisational image.

If you don't know what is acceptable ask your employer or ask for a copy of the dress code if the company has one in place. For instance, the dress code for working in a young and vibrant Advertising Agency will differ quite markedly from the dress code for working in a well respected Law Firm.

2. Prepare your business wardrobe.

Remember the 5 P's: Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance.

Check for loose buttons, stains, hems and cuffs, tags, labels showing.

Sorting out what you will wear for the whole week will reduce your stress level each morning which is a time of day that is often a rush in most.

This is especially true if you are also a Mother!

3. Wear business clothing that suits your body shape.

Are you a pear, a rectangle, a triangle or an hourglass? All these body types have their own requirements if you are to look your best. This includes knowing about what hem length; cuff; jacket; skirts and trousers are best, so if you don't have a really solid idea consider investing in a Style Analysis – <http://www.absolutelystylish.com.au>
Keeping your business dressing simple does not mean boring.

4. Be a Polished Professional.

Casual Fridays were once very popular, especially in the Information Technology and Advertising businesses. This casual dressing code was introduced for a number of reasons and one line of thought was that it was a reward for staff and that staff would feel more relaxed at work.

Correct or formal business dress has largely made a return in many organisations these days. Perhaps this turn around has happened because some employees thought that casual didn't mean clean, smart dressing.

The nature of casual dressing also influenced some people's perception that they could also have a casual attitude towards their work on that day.

Showing up at work in grubby, torn jeans with scruffy hems just doesn't spell success in any workplace.

So if your organisation still has a casual dress day be smart- look smart.

5. Tattoos

Many women from all walks of life love tattoos, however, unless you work in a Tattoo Parlour, you will most likely be asked to keep them covered at work.

You may feel irritated by this request but the employer has the right to ensure that nothing distracts from the image of their business.

Camouflage makeup is available from most pharmacies/ chemists and a Makeup Artist can help you learn how to apply the makeup successfully.

A watch band can help disguise a tattoo on your wrist and dark knee – high hosiery or long socks will often work well for tattoos on your ankles or lower legs when wearing pants. Be smart and don't wait for your bosses' directive cover up.

You can show your tattoos in all their glory when you are on leave from work.

6. Jewellery

Accessorising with jewellery is something that many women love.

For work choose pieces that allow you to project a professional business image and also show your individuality.

Small earrings are best so leave the gorgeous chandeliers at home.

Bracelets that jingle jangle are a real distraction when trying to get your point across or during the selling process, especially when you are trying to close the sale.

Nose rings, multiple ear studs, spikes and tongue studs are usually not acceptable in the majority of business organisations.

Less is best so wear a good quality watch or bracelet; earrings and only one ring

7. Shoes

Clean and well cared for shoes are a must at work. It does not serve you to be fabulously dressed and then show a lack of care and attention to detail by wearing shoes which need a new heel and are scuffed at the toe.

Shoes should be navy, black, dark brown, deep charcoal or a neutral shade to keep the business look flowing from top to toe. The heel height should be medium as too low looks casual and too high screams party time.

8. Handbags

These days the term “matchy matchy” does not apply to the wearing of fashion in general, however, in business it is best if your handbags and shoes do match in colour, texture and quality

Remember that the size of your handbag can make your body look bigger or smaller. If you are carrying more kilos/ pounds than you want to do not use a bag that is quite small as it will make you look bigger by comparison.

The reverse is true if you are very slight so carry a handbag that will compliment your size and creates a very professional look.

9. Mix and Match Suiting

Jacket, pants/ trousers and skirt with a blouse/ shirt makes up the classic business attire for women. We live in times of huge technological advances but some firms still do not allow women to wear pants. Many companies do allow the interchange of mix and match suiting provided the jacket is also worn when meeting clients/ customers.

Remember that if you prefer to wear pants the skirt that goes with the jacket will stay the same colour it was when you bought it but the jacket will fade so rotate between wearing the pants and the skirt.

Aim to have more than one three way combination suit as you need to keep clothing fresh and looking good

All suiting should be well pressed and not shiny from where the iron has come in direct contact with the fabric. Fabric which is not meant to be shiny will look cheap and worn if care is not taken.

Colours which are best for business suits are; black, black- brown which is softer than pure black; navy or charcoal grey.

Blouses/ shirts which lift the colour of the suit and your skin tone will add interest and you will look well and healthy. A medium level contrast between the suit colour and the colour of your blouse is best in business dress.

10. Makeup for Business

Women who wear make-up are seen as more professional.

Is this assumption fair? No, of course not, but it is still true of the perception others have when they see two women; one wearing make-up and one without make-up. If you don't know how best to apply your make-up ask a makeup artist for a lesson

<http://www.skincare-makeup.com.au>

The best makeup for work is one that is light with the use of soft colours which enhance your skin tone and pick up the beautiful colour in your eyes or your wonderful smile.

If bright colours are a favourite of yours they are best left for when you go partying.

Transition from work colleague to Team Leader/Manager

There is only one word which accurately describes this situation and that is; difficult! The difficulty arises because during your time as "one of the girls" you have formed personal friendships with some of your colleagues. The same colleagues you are now called upon to lead.

You most likely will feel that you are caught in the middle between upper management and the people you worked along side of before your promotion.

Some of those people may resent your promotion. Others may think that you will give them special advantages because you are friends. And a percentage will understand that the transition from co-worker to a member of the management team is a difficult road to travel without hitting many potholes along the way. They will know how difficult it is, not only for you, but also for themselves in being lead by a former colleague.

The question, "How do I approach this situation" is a challenging one for both parties.

Remember that everyone has an invisible sign on their forehead which reads, "Please make me feel important".

Everyone, and this includes you, wants to be respected. Being consistent and fair when walking the tightrope upon which you are now precariously perched will eventually win you the respect of your team. But who knows how long that will take? Be prepared for a long haul.

You may feel the need to explain to the whole team that you cannot provide special favours to them now that you are the Team Leader/ Manager and that everyone, including yourself will have to follow the policies and procedures of the organisation.

Work is work and friendship outside of work will need boundaries to be put in place. One boundary could be that work is never discussed when you socialise in out of work hours.

It seems that human beings, no matter what their age, want what they want, when they want it and don't want to be stopped in getting it! In your role as a Team Leader you may have to deal with adults behaving badly.

Internal and External Client/ Customer Service Provider relationships

Most adults in the workplace know what is acceptable behaviour for the society in which they live. Even though the culture of the workers family may be different to their neighbours, it could be argued that most still manage to control themselves when challenges arise.

In really difficult situations it is often better to disagree without becoming disagreeable and aggressive.

In the workplace which has employees from diverse cultural, religious and educational backgrounds it is very important that a positive and fair culture flows from the top down. Surely a team leader or a top level executive cannot expect good behaviour from their teams if they themselves display unacceptable behaviour.

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Anyone who sets a bad example tarnishes their own image and that of their employing organisation.

Internal client/ customer relationships are often in a changeable state and external client/ customer relationships appear, in comparison, to be more static in nature. It stands to reason then that employees may need help when adjusting to changing situations in the organisation.

Some people do not handle change which is imposed on them at all well. In my experience at different places of work this can happen when adult employees are kept in the dark and treated as if they are children. When this happens, you may expect that they will be angry and unacceptable behaviour will be displayed.

However, bad behaviour is not just displayed by team members. Sometimes managers will display the behaviours listed below.

What constitutes bad behaviour at work?

- Swearing
- Sarcasm and ridicule
- Name calling
- Shouting/ yelling
- Racist comments
- Gender- biased comments
- Withholding information which another person needs to do their work.
- Poor personal hygiene
- Favouritism
- Withdrawal of established privileges

All the above would be seen as bullying tactics which you must guard against in yourself and in your team.

If the team member, team leader or any of the executives have challenges in the area of interpersonal skills, it may be a great investment to have an organisational Psychologist/ Counsellor employed for the short term.

Such a person could assist in many areas and help all parties so that they and the organisation flourish in the future.

In the workplace a woman's personal image is not just restricted to how you dress or wear your makeup.

Your image also covers how well you express yourself in the use of language; how you walk and sit and how well you apply yourself to your job and the demands of your position.