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Fashion: Work the look

Published Date: 24 August 2010

Forget the nine-to-five, finding a hard-working wardrobe to suit your lifestyle can turn into a full-time occupation. Jayne Dawson puts workwear on the fashion agenda



Wool/silk blend jacket, £269, ruffle blouse, £69 and wool/silk blend trousers, £139 all Elegance

Bland uniforms may be the default fashion option when it comes to office-wear, but you'll need to work harder style-wise to create a daily look that means business.

Dressing inappropriately is the biggest turn-off for employers, with 57 per cent turning candidates down because of their fashion faux pas, according to research by jobs board CareerBuilder.com.

So whether you have to spruce up with smart shirts and suits or flaunt your creativity with individual pieces, dress to impress with a designated working style.

Job style spec

Want to stand out from your army of fellow 9-5ers? Match your wardrobe to your job description.

"Professional dress is critical in business," says Lisa Talbot, personal and corporate stylist (www.lisatalbot.co.uk).

"The way you package yourself sends a message about you, your skills, and their organisation."

Talbot adds: "Workwear does vary from one industry to another, for example, media, marketing and advertising operate in a more artistic, casual environment, so what those workers wear will reflect their business."

Why not impress the boss with a job-specific workwear brief? Choose from the following tailor-made options...

Office angel

"All office staff are a representation of the organisation they work for, so it's important this is reflected in their business-wear," Talbot advises.

Invest in neutral separates you can mix and match daily with accent colour tops and accessories to vary your look. Play around with uniform-style trends such as military for a smart catwalk-inspired look.

MUST-HAVES: Tailored trousers, smart tops, colourful heels.

Creative critter

"The environment of a creative organisation tends to be more casual as their employees tend to be younger," Talbot explains. "They will follow fashion trends carefully and some employees may even start new trends."

Individuality is key to your look. Opt for clashing prints, bold accessories and surprise flashes of colour.

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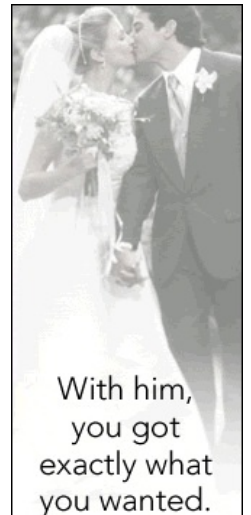
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MUST-HAVES: Oversized blazer, print dresses, statement jewellery.

Boardroom babe

"Held in high regard, women executives and directors must represent professionalism, authority yet femininity," Talbot says. "At this level, investment pieces like suiting should be the perfect fit, cut and design."

Soften hard lines with pleats or frills to add femininity and use accessories to inject personality into bland suiting.

MUST-HAVES: Trouser or skirt suit, tailored mac, designer-inspired bag.

Wardrobe essentials

Don't exhaust yourself styling potential outfits before you've even clocked in for the daily grind; put together a corporate capsule wardrobe that performs for you.

"We all lead very busy lives and a capsule wardrobe will make your life so much easier every morning," Talbot advises.

"It's important to have an array of outfits that have more than one job – you can do the school run, go to a business meeting and still look fabulous when your partner walks through the door."

Unless you have a strict workwear uniform, Talbot recommends investing in key basics that you can mix and match for any situation, whether you're office bound or zipping around meeting clients.

Talbot says: "Most employers do not insist on any rigid, formal dress code but believe that their employees should aim to dress in a smart, business manner and be well groomed."

She lists her hard-working picks:

Smart tailored trousers: "Beware of turn-ups as they can give the illusion of a shorter leg."

White shirt: "Don't stop your sleeve lengths on the widest part of your arm as this will make your arms look bigger."

Skirt: "Look for the style that suits your body shape, whether it's pencil or A-line."

Smart/casual dress: "These are a great one-piece wonder for work or play."

Boyfriend blazer: "A workwear staple that's bang on trend. If you want to look slimmer, a single-breasted jacket is better."

Statement accessories: "Shoes, jewellery, belts and handbags add the finishing touch to any outfit, so don't forget about them."

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