

Dress for Success

About twenty years ago I read a book written by John Malloy, Dress for Success. In the book Mr. Malloy shares his tests for what worked best in clothes. He did not test clothes by asking people if they liked certain clothes but rather by the positive or negative responses they got from wearing the clothes. He suggested that for business we should wear what works not necessarily what we like. After I read the book, I went out and bought what worked and got the responses that he suggested. I would never speak or teach a class without my navy blue suit, white shirt and burgundy tie, the power suit for men. (This seems to still be true, watch when Congress is together)

Then I moved to Key West, dress for the best response was not a suit and tie, I shed my uniform for a more casual look and it became harder and harder to put it on, even when I went on the road. In the 90's the world joined me and we all went casual. I took on the philosophy of wear what feels best not what works; after all the better I feel the better I will work, I thought. Recently, I was reminded that if actors wore what they wanted and not what worked, we in the audience might not get as much out of the show as we would if they had worn the costume of person they played.

As I go around the country to different offices I get to see everything, from real casual jeans and tee shirts, uniform polo shirts to business attire. About a month ago I ran into a man I know at one of the conferences that I spoke. My friend wore the power outfit and I was reminded how impressive he looked. A few weeks ago I pulled out my old ties and jackets and started wearing them and I was reinforced with compliments of how nice I looked. It did not change my message but I think it changed my impact. I am starting to change my casual look for a business look and see if I can find a happy medium that leans toward the business side.

One thing for sure I don't believe that in the office anyone should unilaterally be making a decision on this, there needs to be a consensus and discussion, otherwise it will never work. This might be a great discussion at a meeting.

Question: What are your thoughts on what to wear in the office and do you think it has an impact on co-workers and our customers?

Here in our office we try to have a professional attire. The male staff are required to wear a tie and the females have a dress code. I personally try to wear jackets and dress pants. Not so much dresses anymore. My opinion is to dress with respect but not way over the job seekers head as to intimidate the customer.

Take care and enjoy Fall.

Peace

Teresa B CA

In our office we are to wear dress clothing such as dress slacks, blouses, suits or dresses. On Friday we are allowed to wear jeans and a t shirt as long as the t shirt does not have any filth or profanity. I don't mind the office wear it makes you feel and look nice. Our clients need to see this so that they can look proper also. Well just a few lines to say hello have a good week and will catch you later. Norma

I am a firm believer in using dress to reinforce a "tone" and "message" about the seriousness of our work. I have felt since my class room days that business dress was one way I had to show my respect for my audience. I am a believer in modeling my expectations not just talking about them. In the employment services field both job seekers and employers deserve my sartorial best every day.

I am encouraged to read that many sectors of the business world are readjusting their thinking about proper business dress.

Trish ME

When I was doing workshops for our TANF clients and trying to instruct them on acceptable dress for work, I was sometimes embarrassed by the outfits some of our staff were displaying. The first day of the workshop I would wear a suit, office dress next day, pantsuit and office casual other days to show them the difference. Tight sweaters and what I call "peek-a-boo" blouses and tops are not acceptable. We need to know the difference between party, picnic and work.

Hair, makeup and jewelry are very big issues these days. I had some real problems with this last summer when I was in the YOUTH department.

Body language says who we are before we ever open our mouth. "Dress for Success" is a good slogan for anyone looking for a job or trying to move up. You don't want to know what I think of Tattoos and body piercing.

Jan

I believe that one who dresses to the fit of the group they are working with, will be more of a success. Rather we like it or not, there are people who tend to judge others by what they are wearing. They look at the book cover and based upon their perception of what they see, and they then judge. I say dress to be in alignment with the group you are out to reach. PATTY MC

Our organization has several departments. The overall dress code is business casual but varies from one department to another. When I first started working in this position my supervisor suggested that I purchase polo shirts and khakis due to conducting home visits. I chose to wear business like attire. Every Friday we dress down as long as we wear a Cani shirt with jeans. As time went on and the season changed I started to dress more casual unless I had to do a presentation, training, meeting, or go to a conference. Due to the fact that I am five months pregnant I dress casual more often due to the fact that i can no longer wear some things. I have purchased a few professional attire outfits for special occasions. I am comfortable wearing

professional and casual attire but the difference can be distinguished depending on each profession.

When I attend trainings, others in attendance are wearing jeans, t-shirts, dressed down etc. I often find myself to be one of the few in attendance dressed up, slacks and a nice top or dress suit. I always thought this was a time to look professional and represent your employer, What happened? Thanks for the opportunity.

Nyla

This will certainly get a very lively conversation going. I think we tend to dress for comfort all to often even when a more professional look is desired. I for one enjoy dressing up and looking really good. It makes me feel better about myself and I believe our customers will take us a little more seriously when we look like the professional we are.

Rem

I am a firm believer that you "act" like you dress. Once students started wearing what they thought was appropriate and fought for their dress code, we seemed to be having more problems with discipline, attitude, and learning. In business when we went to a more casual dress some of the same things began to occur. You need to dress appropriately for the job that you are going to be doing or hope to be doing. A few years ago, Apple One came in to our office to give a presentation on their employment services. They brought along a paper that is headed "First Impressions --- Never --- Go Out Of Style." Pictures show the Professional/Interview Dress, Business Office Dress, Casual Dress, and Warehouse Dress. I have used Apple One's web site for tips on Dress for Success as well as Quintessential Careers. They both offer some good advice for this as well as other things. Their web site addresses: www.appleone.com. www.quintcareers.com. When you are trying to obtain a professional workplace, dress is important. When you are trying to impress upon you clients the importance of appearance, it is imperative that you dress appropriately. Besides, we all know that when we are "dressed up" we always feel better than when we are in our Saturday work clothes. Professional clothing should be worn for special meetings, presentations, etc. Business office is what we wear in our office most of the time. Friday's are our casual day. There are times we dress more casual than the pictures show, but it seems to work. When we help someone shop for the clothing that they need for work and they get dressed up to show off their new outfit, it is amazing at the difference in the way they carry themselves, smile, act and talk. Dress does have an influence on your attitude and personality. Perhaps CZ

I think that what we wear at our employment makes a huge impact on what our customers may think, and how they act. For instance, when we have casual day at work on Friday's, I may wear jeans, my customers do not take me serious as when I wear a three piece suite. I do believe that my customers feel more comfortable when I do dress casual, but the question is: "how comfortable do they feel?" I do believe that you receive an unconscious amount of respect when you dress "professional."

I am totally against being "to casual" in the work environment. I do believe that a dress policy should be enforced to all employees, which should consist of: dress pants, a dress shirt, three piece suite, (if you are more comfortable), but never jeans, shorts, or dresses and skirts that are ten inches above the knee. I also feel that everyone should have one casual day, (Friday's).
Lisa S

Dress for Success is an interesting and difficult topic. In fact, this is something I am currently working on with my staff here at Social Services. It is my opinion that folks who are providing services to the public, especially employment services should be dressed professionally. However, defining professional dress seems to be a challenge these days. When the President of the United States is seen wearing denim and sporting a more casual look as well as more and more businesses adopting "casual Fridays", the term professional dress becomes a little watered down. (I actually almost went into a panic when we adopted dress down Fridays as I did not feel I had anything "casual" in my closet that I could legitimately wear to work. Wearing jeans or casual clothes to work was/is very uncomfortable for me. I was raised with "there are school clothes and there are play clothes". I had to change out of my school clothes as soon as I got home. I do the same with my work clothes). So if you wear your "play clothes" to work, will you be more likely to "play" at work? If you dress more casually, will you take your job more casually? It is also my opinion that the way you dress affects a person's credibility and the response of those you work for and with. If you dress appropriately it tells the other person that you respect yourself, your company or agency, and your customers, clients, or co-workers. Professional dress carries respect and authority with it as well. If I go to a bank, financial office, government office, or business, and greeted by a person in casual clothing, I am more likely to lose respect for the company or person as I don't think they take their position seriously. In the same respect, a person who is dressed in business-like attire is more likely to earn my respect. It has been my experience as well, that persons who are likely to be abusive are more so with those who project a "casual dress and manner". On the other hand, professionally dressed persons are seen as being "serious" about their work. My last observation about dress is that most people who suffer from depression stop attending to their appearance. How a person feels about themselves has a lot to do with how they dress or attend to their personal hygiene for that matter. When we were kids we played "dress-up". It made us feel good and we all felt important. Dress is more than just "adornment". It makes a statement. Now, the real problem define "professional dress" Lynn N CA

Workers who dress in a somewhat professional manner, I believe, have more respect for themselves, feel better about themselves. Their clients do appreciate their overall "air" of business know-how. Anonymous

At our one stop and training facilities there is discussion of the importance of keeping more with the business attire and dropping the "corporate casual look". This area is a small rural farming community where things seem to be more casual. So if we this small town on the corner of the world ,are talking more conservative dress-- I think the economy (it's unpredictability and the shaky job market) is dictating everyone take things more seriously-- from the business of work to how we look at work...

---akw , Northern CA

This will date me, but I remember when they first began allowing girls to wear pants instead of dresses or skirts to school. It started out, where we lived, that my daughter who was in high school at that time could wear pants on Fridays. I remember that the comments from the Teachers were that the girls did not behave as well in pants as they did in their dresses and skirts. They had a different mindset, more playful and less inclined to buckle down and work. Of course "Fridays" lend themselves to that anyway. I remember counseling my daughter to watch her behavior at school on the days she wore pants. Now of course you may wear pants, shorts, etc any day of the week. I feel in an office where we counsel people to dress in work appropriate apparel, that we need to model that to them. I am an older worker and do go for comfortable, but comfort does not necessarily rule out business like apparel. I do wear mostly pants and low heeled shoes, but I try for a business look by wearing jackets that match my pants, I wear slacks not jeans and watch my color combinations. I use mostly dark colors like navy, black, brown, maroon, because they look best on me and are subtle. We meet people briefly, with little time to really get to know them, and like it or not first impressions are important, that includes manners, clothing, grooming and attitude. - Employment Advisor, California

I definitely feel that clothes have an impact on first impressions. But that impact also must fit into the expectations of the industry you work in. IBM Blue says company person on the way up, an expert in their field. However, if you work in a creative environment, like multi-media games etc, the suit and tie would not only be out of place but could hinder you from finding employment. I also feel that your geographical location is a factor. Some areas are much more casual than others. Another consideration is whether you work with the public or not. As a rule when working with the public a "professional" attire is always preferred. I don't think there can be a yes or no answer to this question because of the variable factors that could influence the answer. Because the manner in which we dress makes a statement to others and has various status symbols and behavioral attitudes are associated with it I think it all depends on what statement an organization wants to make to their internal and external clients. EL

Thank you for the message on "Dress for Success"

I am sending comments I found in an article on the Orlando(FL) Sentinel, which are pertinent to the subject in question.

" The way you and your employees dress can say as much about your business as the quality of the work you do.

For customers to have confidence in your services and products, they need to have confidence in you.

This is especially important for a small-business owner and his or her staff, said Linda Bennett, an Orlando, FL-based image consultant. We live in a competitive marketplace. Dressing well and maintaining a groomed image will help the little companies stand out. Whether you already have a dress code in place or are thinking about one, it's a good idea to encourage your staff to dress appropriately-especially those who have direct contact with customers. Home-based business owners also need to be aware of their clothing choices. Just because home-based entrepreneurs can roll out of bed and make phone calls in their pajamas doesn't mean they should. When you look polished, you feel polished. Your attitude will improve and productivity increases. That does not mean business owners and their staffs should wear a suit and tie every day. But they should at the very least, look professional. Jamie Yasko-Mangum often sees this problem. As a home-based business owner and image consultant, it's her job to help other business owners set and

maintain company dress codes. Employees tend to follow the example set by the company owner. If the owner wears shorts, flip-flops and ball caps, their employees will follow suit. Customers are detoured from a business if its staff looks unkempt, said Yasko-Mangum, who owns Successful Style & Image in Winter Springs, Fla. " By not dressing professionally, you could be hurting your bottom line: Have a nice day and keep up the good work! Hugo

I used to wear the power suits also. I traveled million miles over 20 years with NCOA and enjoyed dressing up. No more. I work for a more relaxed non-profit in San Francisco. I wear slacks, pressed shirts, casual shoes and like it much more. Now if I were a banker, my uniform would change back to the power look. Regards, Reg Saavedra

In our business of teaching clients how to look for work, we need to "walk the talk" and dress with business attire, whether it be dress slacks or dresses for women and men in slacks and button shirts (ties optional). We have a dress-down day one day a month but are still required to wear the company logo t-shirt. With dress styles changing constantly, it should never be appropriate for women/girls to wear pants with their stomachs/bellybuttons showing and revealing blouses even if it may be their style. Walking through the Mall this weekend seeing several store clerks with low-low cut jeans and revealing shirts, I felt their dress attire was very inappropriate. Although it may be the younger women's fashion, it was offensive to observe and was definitely not work attire. They need to be informed of a professional dress code no matter who the employer is. What is okay to them may be offensive to the public! KC-from CA

What you wear in the office has a profound effect on everyone you meet be it customer or co-worker. The problem with the 'casual' look is a lot of people have no idea what casual is, or I don't know what casual is JR

Dress for success for men is a STANDARD. The model for women seems to be a moving target, but what works best for men today is the same basic thing that worked best 20 and 40 years ago.

Where ever you go, you will find people treat you differently, based on how you are dressed. Over the years since we started teaching the John Malloy principles I have tested them every way imaginable, and no matter what I try, the answer stays the same. IF I am going to a meeting and I want the power, all I have to do is dress for it.

Several years ago, my son, who is now 22 years of age was going to a "model united Nations" convention. He didn't belong to the model UN club in his high school, but his girl friend was the Pres of the club and one of the members got sick and couldn't make the Sat competition, so she invited Kris to fill in. He expressed his concern to me about going when he didn't know anything about what was going on.

I suggested he put on the power uniform and pretend to know what he was talking about. So he did. When they returned from the meet his girlfriend came up to me and proudly announced that Kris had won the trophy for being the outstanding delegate. Over 300 competitors, but he was dressed the best,, got elected as the chairman for his country and

managed to persuade a whole bunch of people to their view..... the big difference between Kris and the rest of the student was his attire.

Even though they were all academically prepared, they still turned to him,, because he Looked like the most mature and intelligent one of the bunch. GW UT

I think it is a great idea. Even in a tropical climate like Hawaii, I find that people take the issue of casual dress to the extreme. My feeling is that we are "role models" for our customers. Especially when it come to job seekers. I also feel that when a dress code is enforced the work environment tends to be more professional and it does positively affect the attitude of the workers. Since our department works with the business community, professional attire is required. I would like to see it become an organizational policy, extending to front line staff at the one stop centers. Jeff HI

Hope that it doesn't bring back the dreaded "dress code" unless of course we receive an increase in pay to allow us to purchase "appropriate" clothing 😊

I dress for the most formal activity of the day. If its just me and my secretary in the office, an open neck shirt and slacks. For meetings with my immediate direct reports, a tie, for outside agencies, a suit, changing the shirt color to match the meeting, tan for meetings with equals, white for meetings with heavy hitters. I always try to have a better crease and shinier shoes. RS

I agree that people receive an impression of us by how we are dressed. So, to have maximum impact, we should be consciously dressing for the situation we find ourselves in. Anonymous

If we need to project credibility, the suit is a must. If we need to project warmth and caring, a softer look is in order. If we need to project energy and enthusiasm, clothing color is a huge factor. Since knowledge is power, knowing your audience is critical to making the best impression. --Cindra—

Lets face it. Your attire is part of how you present yourself and how others ultimately see and respond to you may be based on that first impression. You should dress for the impact you are trying to have. for example: I work for the division of public assistance and interview the public for programs such as food stamps and Cash assistance. It is important to have clients buy into what we are selling (work first philosophy), to do this you can't overdress or many of them will see you as out of their league and therefore they will never identify with you because "you've never been there". if you go too casual you are seen as being just like them, " why should I believe you? you look just like me, we are no different"..

I agree, your statements/mission may be the same however you are dressed but the impact you have on your audience can vary greatly. Nicole

I 'grew up" in the era of Dress for Success. And, having worked in the private sector for many many years, I know there is definitely something to be said about what you wear and how you

perform. There is a great deal of "acculturating" - if that is indeed a word, with the culture where you are working/presenting. My husband lived and worked in Hawaii for 15 years - and Aloha shirts were totally acceptable business attire. Woe to the person who showed up in the business suit - talk about being out of step with the local culture, economy and climate. And that extends to the business with whom you are working and the individuals/departments with whom you interact. Wearing a business suit and touring a lumber mill or a high tech secondary wood product supplier doesn't make it! So, I believe that we need to consider the Molloy info and realize how business and how Workforce has developed in the last 20 years. MZ

Of course our clothing is important in the workplace. First impressions, and all that. However, I find it interesting how the "norm" in work attire changes in accordance with the economic climate. Jobs get tight, on go the suits. Lots of jobs for everyone, out come the Dockers.... Interesting topic, Paul Thanks again for your great ideas. ☺☺ Cheri

I definitely think people take you more seriously when dressed in business attire (suit, shirt, tie). To use the same analogy as below, one has to look the part in order to be effective in the role.

Have you ever known someone, like a teacher or a boss, that you have only seen in austere business attire? And then you see that person in a different setting, on the weekend in the grocery store, let's say, and that person is wearing Bermuda shorts and a t-shirt? Doesn't some of the "mystique" of that person disappear? It's still the same person as before, but now that person seems a little less intimidating. Business attire lends a certain "weight" to the person wearing it. DL

I think people should look professional in the office. Wear hosery etc. It gives one credibility, and is a good example for clients and customers. Professional wear can vary a little, depending on local traditions and weather conditions. For instance, in Florida, perhaps a more casual suit that is light weight with shirt to compliment. In other words, what is acceptable to the general populace. People, as you know, act more professional, when well-dressed. Let me know what you think! Have a good day. Barb

As of October 1st we have been directed to dress in a more professional style. Men are to wear ties, women are to wear hose, etc., etc. My opinion: This is a One Stop Center where the majority of clients are low income - some no income. Considering that, I believe suits, etc. reinforce the belief of many clients that case managers make lots of money and have no understanding of the client's situation. Others may be intimidated by a "power dressed" case manager. They already have enough intimidation in their lives.

On the other hand, I do agree with the principle of "dress for success." Therefore, I can see that we need to set an example on appropriate dress in a business situation, but let's not lose our balance.
Linda in TX

Clothes make a statement. I appreciate stepping into an office where people look professional. I associate that to business casual or business professional. It is a

way to identify who works there and who is a client/customer etc. I know I speak and act differently depending on dress. TM

This topic really rang true for me from the moment you discussed it in training. So many of the things said in [Dress for Success](#) turned out to be right on target in my workshops with welfare clients. Especially in training related to Job Search and Job Retention, if I mirrored the dress code suggestions about which I was telling the clients, they understood the concept better. Most of the trainees thought dressing for success meant dressing up as they would for a night on the town – not always the best sight for a perspective employer. Once I figured out that practicing what I preached was the key, I had much better results on the day trainees were asked to come to training dressed for an interview. They were always amazed on that day when I pointed out how I had mixed and matched some very basic clothes and accessories during the training and yet could have gone on an interview at any time. Additionally, it has been my experience as a public school teacher and a trainer that the more professionally I present myself, the better results I get from those I teach. Joan A., Virginia

As a Manager of Youth Programs within the WIA system, one of our biggest challenges in working with youth on Job Readiness training is appropriate dress. Most of our year round youth programs, as well as summer youth programs, instituted a dress code. I would appreciate hearing any ideas or suggestions that could be implemented for job readiness training programs on this issue. Patricia Pavelsky, Monroe County/Rochester, NY Workforce Investment Board

I work for a social service agency in Wenatchee. Our dress code is pretty casual because management feels the customers, most of the departments serve, are more comfortable with casual attire. I dress according to my daily commitments. If I am inputting data all day I dress casual. If I know I am setting up worksites, meeting with kids at their schools, etc I dress more "professionally."

I am aware that this concept is not earth-shaking news to you, but I had the time to e-mail. Thanks, Teria WA

As a State Employee this item just came up with all level of managers in relation to a Customer Service Training I'm presenting. I also find it very interesting that what we wear does change the attitude of our customers, internal and external. The problem the state has, is that the Union has backed a NO DRESS CODE rule. Now for the worker that doesn't deal with the public in person, this is not a major issue. For those of us that do, our appearance, which includes the clothes we wear, is the first impression to the customer whether we're professional or not. I also know from dealing with people for over 20 years, we all feel better, more professional, when we're dressed up a bit. It shouldn't be uncomfortable, but you shouldn't want to roll up on the couch and take a nap either. Sharp, classic, simple and basic, will last forever and always look good. Reinforcing this is the trouble we have with this agency. How do you make people care more about themselves and how they appear to others, yet maintain their individuality? We all tend to stereotype people and the first impression is hard to forget. Dressing and looking professional for your industry is highly important and may make the difference in

you getting that job, sale, account, promotion etc. Look the part! Great subject, cannot wait to hear from others. Today is yesterday's pupil. - Thomas Fuller

I agree with dressing professionally and not casual. I do think that some concessions should be made, depending on your work environment. For example, the county employees that work for the Parks and Recreation Department and are on the field will dehydrate if they wore a suit. They do wear a uniform that is appropriate for their work environment and has the county logo on it. This makes them look more professional. I think that sometimes part of the problem is financial. Not all employees make the same amount of money and some have more responsibilities than others. In this cases a uniform is ideal. I do think it is important for everybody to dress professional, but this is specially true of receptionists and secretaries. They are often the first contact with our agencies. I find that sometimes they are the ones that tend to wander from the dressing codes the most. I also find it perturbing that supervisors don't seem to address this issues with them. On the other hand, with all the legal actions for discrimination I can see how this would be a delicate subject. Perhaps agencies should have mandatory dress code training every so often, since people tend to relax after being in the same job for a while and let go a little. The sad part about it is that this employees and their feedback are not often taken as seriously as they should. I remember my mother telling me when I was younger: "As people see you they will treat you" (loosely translated from Spanish, I hope it conveys it's meaning). I also find that the client's reactions vary depending on how their workers dress. The more professional looking the worker is the more polite the client seems to be. Of course there are always exceptions. O. Cardenas.

It is well documented, first impressions are formed in less than 30 seconds. Selection of attire to be worn in an office setting not only impacts co-workers but more importantly, those we serve.

While in complete agreement that one should be "comfortable", we need to consider outcomes, particularly where positive first impressions are important. I would suggest one can dress appropriate to the occasion, look professional and still be comfortable. Of primary importance are first impressions made at the front counter. Receptionists, customer service representatives, and other front line staff are most often the first to make contact with customers. They serve as the catalyst for activities which may follow. We have learned from experience, first impressions are important, particularly in an arena where making good first impressions is taught and encouraged. While personal preference in dress should be honored, as illustrated by examples cited in your missive, dress worn to fit the needs of our audience DOES make a difference.

Jim Spence, Manager
Henry County WorkOne Express
New Castle, IN

Things are fine here and I am adjusting to moving to a different building with, of course, a different work environment. I haven't worked in a place this big in a long time, and it does take a bit of getting used to.

All is well. I am looking forward to the "professional work attire" issue, since that is one

that is talked about a lot here. In fact, we are awaiting a "suggested attire" memo from management in the next month.

Maybe I am one of those "old folks" who had to dress up for church, dress up for work, and for going out, but it truly amazes me how some folks come to work. And then they wonder why they "don't get no respect" from customers.?????

I tell the story that a few years ago, I went to a mall before Xmas straight from a Xmas party. So, I was dressed up (black dress and pearls kind of look). When I walked into stores, the help there physically jumped up to help me. Now, does that tell you something right there. If you look like you have \$\$ to spend, they treat you better. Likewise, if you dress professionally (clean, good shoes, hair, makeup, etc), people listen to you and you do gain some respect. LS NY

Thoughts on dressing appropriately.

You only have to look around you, anywhere you are, and see who gets treated with more respect...to know this answer.

And it is all in the beholder's perception.

If you are shopping and you are clean, neat and looking good, you get more help and respect. I remember running in one day to Lord and Taylor's to buy a couple of things. Since I had run in, I had on older jeans, older sneakers and my older jacket. The sales help were pretty rude and I was offended, but.....Did I look like I belonged in that store? No.

The same thing applies for work. Do you look like you work there? Is there a dress code? Do you take some pride in your appearance?

If you want respect, you need to look like you deserve it. LS NY

I definitely believe clothes impact the perspective of people you interact with. It depends on how you want to be perceived. If you are working with welfare clients and want them to see you at their level, then you should dress casually, but if you are visiting businesses and want to be seen as professional and gain their respect, then you should dress accordingly (a suit preferred). I think your outfit should be a day by day decision according to your schedule. It sure is nice to have a couple of comfortable days in the week when you can put the dress down items on, but maintaining an image for your job will mean many business dress days. And there are some people that feel the way they dress, so they have more confidence in a suit and this will reflect if they give a presentation. I am all for casual, and it has been a big topic of discussion in our office at staff meetings. Currently, we have a once per month casual day where we donate money to a local charity to dress down. I tried for once a week, but the ones that do not agree have the authority, so what can I say! Have a great week! TS

[I do believe that in a business office or working with people who you are counseling about jobs or working with employers which is all what I do you do](#)

need to dress up. Now here in this one-stop on Friday they do have a dress down day. However I do not participate in that because of what I stated above. I do not believe we can expect people to look good for an interview or work if we ourselves do not look the part. Okay that would be my opinion. Again have a good week. June NY

It's interesting that this came up recently in our office, as well. Our welfare to work program has a more business-like dress code (although suits are not necessarily mandatory, tee-shirts, jeans, and other very casual clothes are frowned upon), while the eligibility technicians in the same office are sometimes very casual. What occurs to me is how we can ask our customers to dress well for interviews and subsequently in a manner appropriate to their work environment when we are not willing to provide them with an example that would be considered appropriate in most of the business environments in our service areas. That said, I realize that there is occasionally some discrepancy from region to region as to what is "office-appropriate" attire; in one town I've lived in, the only people I ever saw in suits were lawyers, doctors or professors. In my current area, though, most employers will expect a minimum of business casual and will in some cases require the "power suit." It's extremely damaging to my credibility as a case manager to counsel my customer to invest in this type of clothing when they see others in a government office (whose jobs they would love to have, in most cases) who are wearing jeans and tee shirts. Telling them to do so while I am dressed in jeans and a tee shirt would be even less believable. The old adage "do as I say, not as I do" comes to mind, as does the fact that I've never found that philosophy to be very effective.

I agree that any decisions about dress should be discussed in the office. However, I think that the impact of the message we're sending to our customers and our credibility as far as being able to demonstrate that we are taking our own advice must be taken into consideration in that discussion.

Have a great week!

Hillary

What you wear is not nearly as important as the confidence and positive attitude you put on. There are some business persons who can wear the navy suit, white shirt and burgundy tie and still look frumpy and un-professional. Neat, clean and worn well. Just about anything can look good as long as you are professional in it. This is much more problematic for women. The choices are endless as to what is acceptable in the work place. For instance, if you are a woman of color in California why should you be required to wear pantyhose? Sleeves, no sleeves? In the office I work in the office manager (whose judgment is counted on to interpret the dress code) resembles "Mama" from "Mama's Family" and has the old attitude to match. According to her interpretation of the dress code: no open toe shoes, no skirts above the knee, no sleeveless blouses, and panty hose only. Come on, not only is it the twenty first century, it's California for goodness sakes! Some of the young ladies in the office have opted to move on (high turn over in the office) and or give up all together by staying in compliance with an awful attitude.

Unless you are working in the White house, what you wear should fit into your work environment, personality and business attitude.

Emily P. Amparan

I once had an old football coach who believed in the dress for success philosophy even before it became popular. He believed that even though we weren't as talented as other teams, when we walked onto the field, we would look like the best team in the conference. Psychologically, we also played like we thought we were the best. I believe this same philosophy holds true in the workplace. If you feel good about yourself and the way you look, you're going to feel better about your surroundings, the people you work with, and the people that you serve as customers. I also think the old book Psycho cybernetics emphasized the fact that a person's outlook on life changed as their self image changed. Clothes seem to play an important role in self image.

I also had the opportunity to work in a school environment where instructors were held in high esteem by their students not only because of their position, but also because they looked the part of an authority figure. I feel that some of our problems in schools today stems from the fact that you can't tell the instructors from the students. This same concept may spill over to the human services field where I've often heard that we need to dress like our customers so they will feel comfortable. Maybe our customers would really be more comfortable with someone in an authoritative role giving them advice and counsel. [GJ IA](#)

I favor the professional business attire look in our office as it does impact our professional image. When I teach our interviewing workshop, we talk about dressing for success. I emphasize dressing up a step for the interview because it sets the tone that we take this interview seriously. I believe that we have a greater impact for both our customers and co-workers when we dress professionally.

I am not saying that the men in our office need to be in a business suit to work with our customers, but a nice shirt, tie, slacks and dress shoes set a better image than a tee shirt, chinos, and sneakers. We are promoting our customers to sell themselves and the image is part of the product being sold, thus we should also be setting the example for selling the product.

I believe that with professional attire, whatever the person wears should be comfortable. I tell our women customers even though they have a new dress or pantsuit, if it doesn't feel good, wear something else that feels good because it will help their self-confidence and set the business image. I tell the men that the clothes they wear should also set a business image and don't wear it if it doesn't feel good. Clothes should be set a powerful image but also feel good. Remember, whether the person is a customer we are helping or the person is someone who is interviewing us, the question is always how does this person's image influence me or my company [AD](#)

If you discuss this with 20 people you will get 10 different opinions. I feel that "power" dressing may good for those that want to be in power. For those of us hacking it out on

the front lines, comfortable is better. The folks we work with as clients can be intimidated by power dressers. They can't identify with that very well and don't respond as well when compromises need to be made in some cases. I like a polo shirt and slacks as a good compromise. Then you are dressed somewhat better than your clients, but not enough to make them feel uncomfortable. **OM**

This week's subject is one near and dear to my heart.

I firmly believe what you wear must take into consideration what image you wish to convey, as well as where you will be. Whether you want to convey professionalism, a business like atmosphere, trendy party look etc..... By location I mean where are we meeting and who will be there? Will we be meeting with internal customers, external customers, or peers?

I believe your dress is so very important, and it must fit the specific occasion.

I will give one example, when we have a casual day at this District Office, I will not wear blue jeans of any type, or work out shoes like Addidas, Nike, Saucony or any other exercise shoes. That to me is for wearing at home and on days off where I will not be coming to work with any customers...internal or external. This is not practiced by most others here, including other managers. **AD**

After looking at my negative return on my 403 B retirement account, I just had to respond to the dress code for the Wall Streeters. I think they would look good in a prison stripe ensemble.

Thanks for this morning's laugh. ST

As for my opinion on how to dress, it varies. Personally, I like to dress up, depending on the circumstances. When I first came to social services in 1980, our Director, Ernie Sprouse, insisted we all pretty much dress professionally. He said we were setting an example for our clients, and if we dressed to look like most of them, they were going to think, "hey, our dress is ok," no matter where they went to look for employment. I have never gotten away from that. More casual dress, in my opinion is very appropriate for training, etc; however, anything can be taken to extreme. I think we have to use common sense.

If you are getting positive feedback from changing back to suits and ties---go for it! It can't hurt. I believe society itself is making a change, for the most part. Who knows what trends will pop up next?

REMEMBER! CLOTHES MAKE THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

Have a great week.

Sincerely,
Wanda Taylor

Yes, I noticed the congressional attire.....I attended the university of virginia...all the time I attendedwhich was considerable.....I wore the traditional garb...blue blazer, khakis, loafers...bass weejuns, light blue shirt, yellow paisley tie, surcingle belt.....the question is....what is the culture of the workplace? Dress to that...use commonsense...if possible....our workplace attire is casual to sloppy.....depending on the

individual.....when teaching job club and counseling individuals i wore necktie, slacks and dress shirt,,,90% of the time....most recently i have veered away from that....but still wear dress shirt and slacks, so it's sans tie....i think its more difficult for women....particularly the range of clothing a women can wear....be neat, be clean, and fresh smelling, make good eye contact, and smile...when appropriate....just like in the job interview.....don't overdress either..... Len ...Ohio

It's interesting that this should be your topic this time because we have been having lengthy discussions about this same subject. We have "relaxed " our dress code for the summer months and allowed the staff to wear "walking" shorts, however, it seems there are several definitions to what a walking short actually is. We have admin staff looking like they are working in their garden.. This also brings up a problem with Supervisors...our Admin supervisor is the one who dresses the worst on these days and so she does not reinforce the standards with her staff. Our supervisor tries to keep us all in line and this causes conflict with upper management. We have ordered company shirts hoping to have a more "corporate casual" look.. Next year, we will be moving into our new One Stop and will have more partners on the premise. We need to get this solved now before we create more headaches....help Linda Baker

I work in a a transitional facility for homeless women and children. For me, it's comfort before beauty, and if I can manage to combine the two, that's great. When I am called on to represent the agency in the community, or on board meeting nights, I dress up accordingly. One of the perks of being in this field, for me, is that we are generally a bunch of humanitarians who value individuality. My attire reflect that. I do, however, think it is important to model professional behavior for our clients, which includes appropriate attire. I'm just grateful that I don't work in a bank, and I generally think I'm quite stunning ~ ta da! ~ Claudia,
Richmond, VA

On office dress, I require professional dress which includes women wear hose unless there is a Dr. note on file that they are unable to wear them. Professional dress is important because we are always in the public eye and most important we teach people how to dress to impress, interviewing techniques, etc. It's also part of customer service, showing respect for the customer we are working with by having respect for ourselves. Just a few thoughts.....
Lulu

This is an awesome topic and one of my pet-peeves.

I have always felt that how one is dressed is how one will be perceived.

I typically go for the "professional business look" except on Fridays, when we can dress more casually. But even then, if I wear jeans I make sure they fit properly, are not too old and wear a dressy blouse or blazer with them.

It really grates on my nerves when I see co-workers dressed very casually on a daily basis.

Being involved in employment and training, I think we have a responsibility to "show" job seekers appropriate ways of dressing. If I as a staff person "look like a job seeker" it implies that it's okay to dress casually to an interview and not look for ways to impress an employer.

Some might say that dressing business-like intimidates certain job-seekers...so are you saying I should set them up for failure by giving them permission to dress casually by looking unprofessional myself? Who is the role model in this scenario? If an employer should happen to visit unannounced, who do you think he will be more impressed by...the professionally dressed staff person, or the casually-dressed staff person?

I was very pleased when I too read that several brokerages and computer companies were returning to the more professional dress code.

-California-

What a great topic for discussion. It seems that this can be a struggle for some. I feel that you should dress according to the environment that you want to create and the impression that you want to make. Attire definitely, whether we want to admit it or not, sets the tone and creates an image. However, people also relate more to people who look like them. For instance, the training that you are providing for the Los Angeles Conservation Corps in November has a casual audience. I am not confident that they would feel comfortable or be able to relate to a presenter in a three-piece business suit. Vice versa for an audience that consists of high-powered executives who are used to dressing in business attire. On the other hand, if you wanted to create a casual environment/training setting for the high-powered executives, you might want to "loosen them up" by wearing something casual. I would suggest before making an absolute change to your attire that you instead, ask the training coordinators what type of audience you will have and adjust your attire accordingly. You will want to reach all of your audiences and you don't want an issue such as attire to hinder that goal. I feel that the issue of attire (especially in the workplace) should always be open for discussion and should be addressed to encourage effectiveness and productivity. Hope my thoughts have been helpful.
Felicia Vann

In any case, thoughts on the dress code issue - this was the hottest and most contentious issue debated over the 12 years I was at my former place of employment, a community college in Oregon. I believe it is totally dependent on not only the nature of the position/job but also the context of the setting. Casual Fridays where the team can wear jeans is fine, providing you don't have an important meeting, presentation or other event where you need to convey a more professional image. While I agree with the basic premise of your statement in getting staff consensus, it leaves a great deal open to individual interpretation. What I have found works best in practice is to have general guidelines, but address specific inappropriate digressions to the dress guidelines, on an individual basis. The term "business casual" to one means nice slacks and a shirt/blouse - to another, it may mean jeans or skirt with a t-shirt and sandals. My personal guideline is when in doubt, overdress for the occasion rather than under dress. I

man can always take off the coat & tie and a woman can remove her suit jacket - but it's hard to fix a situation where one is underdressed.

Kathleen Simko,
Boise, ID

Professional office dress is like a two edge sword. When workers are required to dress professionally (no casual clothing), work is enhanced and most people act and respond in a more professional manner. This is especially true of our co-workers. We seem to work more efficiently and our overall demeanor is better. The other side of this is that our clients see us as stuck-up and "better than they are." This in turn causes confusion and mistrust between workers and clients. When I dress casual I get a better response from my clients but a laid back response from co-workers (more inclined to "goof off"). JB VA

Interesting comments on Dress for Success. I work for a faith based organization and we have casual day once a month. I have worked for other organizations where "business casual" was the norm. I agree with you that dressing professionally (suit and tie)sends a different message than casual dressing. I do however enjoy being able to trade off, depending upon my schedule. JW CA

I have always felt that you "Dress for Success" the world has gotten just a little too casual. The office that I work in is a "business casual" approach and as always some people have taken it one step too far. I myself after the first of the year am going back to wearing a shirt and tie everyday except Friday which is our "dress down" day and we contribute a \$1 which at the end of the year we give to charity or split up between possible needy clients. Last year for example we gave 3 clients Christmas gifts for their children. A little off the subject but I think as you said your attire doesn't change your message. I think that right now we have to go back to the more traditional attire for work because in our field we sometimes don't get taken seriously when dressed casual. A client came in our office one day and made a comment that got all of our attention. She said "I can't tell who are the clients and who is part of the staff", because we had gotten so casual and that is what can happen. So I think that we need to promote this to our clients, we tell to dress for the interview, and then when they come into see us we are dressed casual. Many of our clients don't understand what "business casual" is let alone what "Proper Business Attire" is. So it is important that we make sure that they see the difference. In this day and time maybe it is time that we went back to some our traditional values and morals. There was a time when you didn't go to an interview without a suit on, in fact you didn't dare show up to fill out the application without a tie on. That was stressed because you never know who you might be handing your application to. Might be time to return to the "Good Old Days". ML OH

When I went to Social Work school in Mexico I was inform of dress code. The show us visually what to wear. Since then I have tray very hard to look professional and act professional. To promote professionalism appearance, is not just only base on the style of your dress, but in how

that you wear them. When you look professional it gives you the sense of security, control, and in some way a social status that is you who is in control over a group of people. I believe that, the professional title should go along in reciprocal financial status as well with a specific and characteristically dress code (including perfume, make-up, accessories and shoes, etc.).

I have observed that when I dress business style people notice me more, I received positive feedback from co-peers, and subordinates as well from the public in general.

When you are in the professional field and work for living, is rules and regulations regarding to dress code that you have to follow. You should dress accord regarding what type of image you are trying to perpetrate. For example: I have the opportunity to attended to a training regarding to Angry Management. From my observations during that day I know that it will be a complete failure from the beginning. The presenter (white female) came with a plain white t-shirt wrinkle, a black skirt with out slip, sandals, no make-up, her hair was just wash? no hair style. I know then, that this person wasn't professional and prepare to teach me anything, just base on my observation. I develop I sense of rejection toward this person that I did not have seen or meet before. At the beginning of her presentation, her open statement was " I have not time to prepare handouts, I put my material together yesterday (one day before the presentation), I e-mail the material to the agency yesterday after 5:30 p.m. After this statement I know not just based on my observation regarding to her dress code that it was I waist of my time but, that my observations regarding to her professionalism were correct.

So as you see, people will perceive you as you dress. Your dress code will say so much about a person. And people can perceive this. I think that your dress code is not just clothing but proper vocabulary, manners, personality, respect, and in some way and expression of been a knowledgeable person as well express a social-economical status.

When you are the leader, director or supervisor, should place your self as an example to others. Remember, people learn through observation first, than by experience and third by knowledge. So is several factors that you have to considered when you are the leader or the speaker in a conference: you have to know your topic, you have to know the diversity of the group composition, possible questions, give professional hand-outs with quality information. Adding dress code to all this, and the audience or people around you will perceived you as a successful business men or woman.

Maria Towery

I think individuals should dress appropriately for the occupation that they are performing. This topic is worth about 10 to 15 good minutes of discussion. RJ CA