

Dress for

success

Gay Richardson from Style Me Confident speaks to **Laura Cartledge** about dressing for work.

The job market is notoriously difficult at the moment, with each role receiving a flood of applicants. With just four seconds to make a first impression this means standing out from the crowd is more important than ever.

"People in HR have told me they can scan the room and know instantly who will be successful," says Gay Richardson. "You are more likely to get on, and ahead, if you dress well."

But what is dressing well? "It's not to do with fashion, it is about being up to date," Gay replies. "You might dig out a trouser suit from the 70s thinking it is smart but it implies your skills are out of date too."

Instead the leading influences on what you wear should be about matching what is expected of you and the perception you will give off.

"If it doubt it is always best to go for too smart," explains Gay. "You can take a jacket off but you can't put one on if you don't have one - and it shows you care."

Gay believes good examples of people who get this right are the effortlessly elegant Michelle Obama and Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge aka Kate Middleton.

"Nude shoes are a real staple of Catherine's as they make you look taller which makes you feel more confident - plus they go with everything," adds Gay.

Being smart doesn't mean you have to lose your sense of personality however. "It is still important to look right for you," Gay says. "But perhaps wear wild underwear or shoes instead. And accessories are something you can use to add personality."

So the key qualities you should look for in work wear is being comfortable, practicable and stylish while still having fun.

"Make sure you think about the fabric," Gay explains. "For example linen will crease but a wool mix is cool but comfortable."

Thankfully the autumn-winter season will see a lot of trouser suits in the shops.

"My tip would be to buy a dress, trouser, jacket and skirt," says Gay. "This will give you four key basics which you can use to create a variety of different looks."



Gay's top tips

- Look at what the leaders in your industry are wearing or ask for guidelines, most businesses have them.
- Don't show too much skin. Cover your arms and skirt length should be on or below the knee.
- Buy one good bag that you can fit everything you need in. Carrying more makes you look cluttered.
- Make sure what you wear is practical and job appropriate as it is important to feel comfortable in what you wear.

The four levels of formality...

TRADITIONAL

Clothes: a suit; formal, tailored, matching pieces, structured fabric.
Communicates: authority, ability, credibility

CREATIVE

Clothes: a jacket; semi-formal, softly tailored, up-to-date styles, colours and patterns, finer fabrics
Communicates: capability, receptiveness, creativeness

PEOPLE-ORIENTED

Clothes: a collar; informal, casually tailored, unmatched pieces, knits.
Communicates: flexibility, approachable, knowledge

CASUAL

Clothes: no collar; untailored, denim, khaki, corduroy.
Communicates: informal, responsive, available

To find out more about Gay's range of styling services, visit www.stylemeconfident.co.uk or call 01903 538774.

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How to ..do business wear the rules and regulations made easy (and a teeny bit naughty)
September 10 Ship Hotel, Chichester
September 17 Barneys, Worthing