



MasterCard Working™
FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Susan-Says®:

What you wear impacts your business success.

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Since the 1990's there has been a trend toward business casual attire in the workplace. Many experts argued that people would be more productive if they dressed more comfortably at work. However, much of the research shows that casual attire often results in casual or sloppy performance. And today the pendulum is swinging back toward more formal attire.

As a business owner, it's important to recognize that what you wear and how you look is as important to your business as the quality of your product or the presentation of your marketing materials. In a survey conducted by Office Team, 81 percent of employees polled said a person's work attire affects his or her professional image.

"People tend to form immediate impressions of each other," said Diane Domeyer, executive director of OfficeTeam. "Dressing professionally provides instant credibility and signals to clients, customers and colleagues that they're working with someone who takes the position seriously."

One client of a large law firm told me that he fired the firm after he attended a meeting where his lawyers showed up in golf shirts and khaki pants. "I didn't feel very good about paying them \$350 an hour when they didn't care enough to dress any better than that," he explained.

Think about the image you want your employees, customers and clients to have about your business. Are you dressing in a way that reflects that same image? As a business owner, you should develop a personal style that makes a statement about your business. You want to project confidence, credibility and character.

It's not only important for you to dress appropriately, but you also want to set a tone for your employees. After all, how can you expect your employees to dress professionally if you are dressing like a slob?

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You need to create a corporate dress code for your company that reflects your corporate culture, and you should make sure it is applied consistently throughout the company. Make sure every one understands the significance of adhering to the code.

Exactly what type of attire is appropriate for your business depends on the nature of your business and your industry. Here are some general guidelines that may help you.

Never wear clothing that makes a political or cause-related statement, unless it is directly tied to your business. For example, don't wear political buttons or t-shirts with controversial material. While the great thing about this country is that we have the freedom to express our opinion, in business it is best not to alienate a customer or client. Unfortunately, many people make quick and unfair judgments about others based on their beliefs.

Always dress in good taste. Not every business requires you to wear a suit everyday, but avoid pop-culture trendy attire. Clothing that is revealing or appears un-kept will not present the professional image your company needs.

Overwhelming accessories such as heavy jewelry or cumbersome bags are not recommended. You want your customer or client to focus on you and not be distracted by Christmas tree ornament earrings or a disorganized, overflowing briefcase.

Don't knock your customers or co-workers over with smelly perfumes or cologne. You may think you smell great but your customer may find you nauseating. Scent should be subtle. Many people are sensitive to perfumes and colognes, so err on the conservative side.

People do judge a book by its cover. Make sure your business book has a cover that makes it a best seller.

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