

PROJECTING A WINNING IMAGE IN TODAY'S COMPETITIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

By Clare Spiegel

Smith, we need to talk to you about your career path here at Acme Widget Industries. . . .

If this is a conversation that you don't want to have with your boss, you should start thinking more about the image you are projecting to upper management, your peers and customers.

"The manner in which you present yourself to others, including the way you dress, may be playing a more prominent role in mapping your career path than you realize," says Clare Spiegel, a nationally known fashion expert who specializes in advising corporations and trade groups on fashion and image. And, with the "dressing down of America," business professionals have become more perplexed about dressing for success.

Spiegel offers the following tips to career-minded businesspeople (male and female):

Be aware of your surroundings at work and while you are meeting with customers. How does upper management dress? Is it the traditional business suit with accompanying starched white shirt, or is the garb more trendy? Emulating the boss never damaged a career.

Attack the "closet monster": Although you may have become attached with your old duds, they may be depreciating your fashion image. It's always a good idea to shop your closet, and ask yourself if you would purchase the same garment in its present condition. If the answer is no, make a quick phone call to the Salvation Army.

Choose classic styling for your base wardrobe pieces. Pay close attention to fabrics, colors, tailoring. Fabrics should be global, with tightly twisted light weight wool fibers. They're wrinkle resistant and breathe. Build with global colors. Color has temperature. Everyone has a pattern of color temperature which is found in one's skin tone, hair color and eye color. These factors must be taken into consideration when selecting our wardrobe pieces.

Be aware of the fashion trendline: Trends are not fads. They are longer living ideas and looks created by the fashion industry. While a fad may last one or two seasons, a trend is more durable and tend to follow a much longer life cycle. Don't spend a lot of money on fad items, purchase looks that are trends.

The trendline has a **mountain-shaped life cycle**. When the trend is introduced at a fashion show and appears in designer shops it is new. Add the new fashion idea to your wardrobe. Next it appears in better department stores -- the trend is still fresh and it's still a good time to add these items to your wardrobe. Once you begin seeing the items everywhere and at the discount stores, the trend has probably matured. Now is the time to spend your hard earned money on the new ideas, or stick with the classics.

Being well dressed is about attitude, not money. It's better to buy fewer, but better things - things that should last you for many years to come. Planning before you shop is imperative! Shop the sales, but don't let bargain prices rule your wardrobe. Remember, you can create new looks by mixing your quality hard pieces (jackets and pants) with different shirts or blouses, shoes and accessories.

**Clare Spiegel, America's Image Master
Your New Fashion Image**

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Pay particular attention to the shoes and belts -- they can make or break your look!

Specifics For Men:

- Begin with a dark navy suit, then add charcoal gray or taupe.
- Add a navy blazer then a black blazer.
- Khaki and gray trousers are a must.
- Solid white dress shirts are necessary for the solid navy and charcoal suits, cream dress shirts are great with taupe, browns and olives. Stay away from stripes and shiny fabrics for your base wardrobe.
- Ties are an expansion of your personality. Color and pattern may depend on who you work for, what appointments you have and what the “tie-code” is with your company.
- Have fun adding new creative wardrobe pieces that will set you apart during off-site functions, after hour entertaining or casual Fridays and during social occasions. Collared knit shirts, textured tee shirts in silk or linen, ramie blends, vests, denim shirts, softer pants such as Dockers and less structured jackets all lend to a signature look saying, “I’m special and I have class.”

Specifics For Women:

- Global colors are black, dark navy, and the beige family - camel, khaki, taupe, sand or beige. Winter white is great to add later.
- Global suits should be comprised of three matching pieces -- a jacket, a bottom, (either skirt or pant or both, if you can afford it) and a matching piece for under the jacket. It’s the matching under piece that creates the moveability and added function to the wardrobe.
- Your base pieces should be dyed to match separates that create a matched suit when completed.
- Determine whether warm or cool colors are best for your cosmetics. It will save you thousands of dollars and assure that you will always look great! This will guide you in color selection for your clothing as well. Fashion news in cosmetics should never deter you from wearing “your” color family. It should help you with new ideas for application and help you discover new shades available within your color family.

Other considerations for choosing the proper clothes to wear from the store or from your closet include: the occasion, your age, your physique or figure and where the fashion item is on the trendline. And of course, what you wear, how you act, what you say and how you say it combine to form the way we are perceived by others.

Clare Spiegel is a national authority on fashion and image. She is an accomplished fashion merchant, television personality, public speaker, model and fashion consultant to corporate America. Her book, Your New Fashion Image is considered a “must-read” for all who want to look their best, feel their best and be their best! She is available internationally for warm, detailed and educational fashion and image seminars, fashion shows and training workshops. For more information, call (954) 755-7933, or you can write her at 1961 Oakmont Terrace, Coral Springs, FL 33071.

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