

BUSINESS



Staten Island Advance

What's appropriate for the office?

Even in the summer there are some clothing items that shouldn't be worn

Sunday, June 22, 2003

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Spaghetti straps or long sleeves? Tie or top button un-done? Shoes or sandals? Stockings or not? These questions, and others like them, are starting to pop up in offices across the country as summer and warm weather approaches.

According to Great Kills image consultant, Beryl Wing, it all depends on your working environment. She explains that there are four different working environments: Corporate, communicative, creative and labor. The corporate environment includes places like law offices and Wall Street banks; communicative fields include teaching, real estate, sales positions and other offices; creative jobs would include working at a trendy magazine or in the modeling industry, and the labor field is any job that requires physical work.



Beryl Wing

"If you work in a creative environment you have much more room to dress than you would in a corporate or communicative environment, but there are no hard and fast rules that you must follow, said Ms. Wing.

Even though the summer weather is warm and it might be tempting to wear things like spaghetti straps, shorts or sandals, in most work environments they are not considered acceptable office clothing for the corporate or communicative atmospheres.

LESS POWER

"The more bare your body, the less power you have," explained Ms. Wing. "If you look at ancient Egyptian paintings the person with the least amount of clothes on is the slave. If someone has less clothes, they have less power."

The summer office dress code for men is straightforward: A nice button down shirt, in a light color, and lightweight slacks. The main issue for the office man is the tie. The tie depends on the office environment.

"If you are interested in power, wear the tie all summer. It gives a man the look of authority and power. If you work in a casual communicative environment or a creative environment you can try it without the tie and unbutton the top shirt button," Ms. Wing advised.

For women the summer office wardrobe is a little more complicated because they have more choices. Lightweight slacks or a long skirt are their best bets. Even though the weather may be warm outside, if possible a woman should wear a jacket, because it has a connotation of power

with it. Ms. Wing suggests, trying short sleeves under a lightweight jacket and then when you're in your own office you can take the jacket off, but when dealing with others you can put it back on and have the power and authority it carries.

"One of my biggest pet peeves is when fashion magazines say it's summer and it's okay to go without stockings, that is not true," said Ms. Wing. "Stockings, like a jacket, are a power issue. If the men wear socks the women should be wearing stockings. Without stockings you look like you're half dressed."

Sandals, like the stockings and the jacket, usually come down to a power issue.

"Wearing sandals depends on the company and how everyone else is dressing, but I think they're always wrong," said Ms. Wing. "Mules can pass, but not sandals. When you think about shoes think about the Achilles heel and it becomes metaphorical. Men cover their feet, while women often wear sandals and leave themselves vulnerable."

NO TIGHT CLOTHES

Both men and women should avoid clothes that are tight fitting for a couple of reasons. First they often make you feel hotter and second when clothes are form fitting they cause you to give up some of your aura of power.

When the weather gets really hot having a dress-aid kit in your desk at work is a good idea. This self-assembled kit should contain items like: Skin lotion, a washcloth and deodorant. Give yourself a refreshing midday break in the rest room to spiff up your appearance.

Even in the summer there are some clothing items that are never appropriate. This list includes, jeans, sweat suits, leggings, T-shirts, bare midriffs, workout clothes, sneakers, hats and ripped or tattered clothing.

Ms. Wing said a company memo she once saw cautioned employees that if they had to think if their clothing was appropriate for work, then it probably wasn't. She cautioned against using this line of thinking.

"The people who are wearing the inappropriate clothes are the people who are never going to ask themselves that question," she said. "What you should think is: 'Would I feel comfortable wearing this with my friends or on the beach?' If the answer to that question is yes, then you should go change."

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