

Dress for success—even if standards have relaxed

Climbing the corporate ladder still requires the right look, new research from staffing firm OfficeTeam suggests. Eighty-six percent of professionals surveyed and 80% of managers said clothing choices affect someone's chances of being promoted.

The study also found that most workers pay at least some attention to their fashion choices: They spend an average of 11 minutes a day selecting an outfit for the office.

Men either put more thought into their work clothes—or take longer to make simple decisions. The survey found men spend an average of 12 minutes each morning figuring out what to wear, compared to just nine minutes for women.

Young workers may care more about work fashion than baby boomers, or perhaps practice makes perfect. Employees age 18 to 34 spend 13 minutes picking out their wardrobe, while those 55 and older have that routine pared down to just seven minutes.

Wear this, not that

What clothing is office-appropriate? HR managers said jeans, athletic shoes and leggings are more acceptable at work now than they were five years ago.

Employers have become less tolerant of tank tops, tops that expose one or both shoulders and shorts.

Addressing employee dress

What happens when professionals fail to dress to impress? Forty-four percent of senior managers said they have had to talk to an employee about inappropriate attire, and 32% have had to send someone home because of what they were wearing.

Half the bosses who had to crack the dress code whip said those conversations were awkward and unpleasant.