Dressing and Professionalism.

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Introduction:

Presenting a positive image of yourself is critical to achieving professional success. What you dress and how you communicate with people, both verbally and nonverbally can all have an impact on the impression others construct of you. Developing a professional appearance might assist you in commanding attention and serious consideration at work.

> ➤ **What is dressing professionally?**

Dressing professionally refers to wearing clothes and accessories designed for a professional workplace. Professional outfits are modest, well tailored and free of images or graphics. Your clothes should be clean, ironed and free of rips, holes or stains.

The level of formality in each work environment differs, so dressing professionally in one setting may mean wearing a suit while another office may advise employees to wear khaki pants and company polo. Review your company handbook to learn about the specific policies at your organization.

> ➤ **Why is it important to dress professionally at work?**

> ✓ **To make a good first impression:** Your appearance is often the first thing others notice about you. Dressing professionally can help form a positive impression to people you meet in the work place. This is especially important for interviews and when meeting upper-level managers who make hiring and promotion decisions. The initial judgments people make about you can influence their long-term opinions.

✓ **To communicate that you take your job seriously:** Dressing professionally sends the message that you are serious about the work you do. It shows that you spend time and effort on your appearance, which demonstrates that you care about representing yourself well at work. When you show that you take your job seriously, it helps others see you as someone they should respect and take into consideration.

✓ **To represent your company:** As a member of your organization, you serve as a representative of the company to the public. Whether you're making service calls, visiting clients or speaking with customers in a store, your appearance reflects on the business. Dressing professionally helps you present a positive, professional image of your organization to others. Even if you dress casually or wear a uniform, making sure you look neat and put together can improve the reception you receive. Employers appreciate employees who consider themselves as company ambassadors to the public.

✓ **To give you confidence:** You can do your best work when you feel your best. Dressing professionally can help you feel empowered and confident to take on new challenges, meet new people and progress in your career. When other areas of your professional life may be out of your control, how you present yourself is something that you can control and use to your advantage.

✓ **To help you feel part of the team**: Being able to work with others is a crucial element of success in many professional environments. Dressing professionally can help you feel like you belong in spaces with your peers and supervisors and that you have valuable insights and ideas to contribute. Your colleagues may be more inclined to include you in important discussions and projects if you appear professional and committed.

✓ **To enhance your credibility:** When you look professional, people respond more positively to you, often engaging more and trusting what you're saying. Dressing professionally can give you an added layer of credibility in your dealings with coworkers, managers, clients and the public.

Benefits of having a dress code at work

- ✓ **Eliminating subjectivity and miscommunication:** Having a dress code can help eliminate subjectivity in wardrobe choices. How employees define terms like "casual" or "professional" can vary, so having specific guidelines can help avoid these concerns.
- ✓ **Ensuring fair treatment:** Creating an official dress code policy can help ensure that all employees receive fair treatment from supervisors.
- ✓ **Presenting professionalism:** With a dress code in place, no matter who comes into your office, they are met with a professional environment, which can create a positive association with your company.
- ✓ **Promoting productivity:** When all employees dress professionally and have an extra boost of confidence, it can lead to a more motivated and productive team.
- ✓ **Making employees easily recognizable:** In some companies, instituting a dress code that includes uniforms can help your employees stand out. This can be important for employees who need customers to recognize them, such as those who make service calls, like technicians, or those who work in crowded spaces, like restaurant workers,
- ✓ **Adhering to safety standards: In** some industries, like manufacturing, law enforcement and healthcare, dress codes are vital to ensure the safety of employees, clients and patients. Safety goggles, flame resistant clothing and gloves are a few examples of necessary elements of a company's dress code.

Here are some more tips for dressing professionally at work:

Dress one level above your position

Generally, most professionals should aim to dress for one level higher than their current position. For example, an entry-level employee may dress appropriately for an intermediate-level position. Middle managers may dress more in line with department managers or directors.

Consider more than just your clothes

Dressing professionally involves more than the clothes you wear. You should be clean, neat and well groomed. Consider your hairstyle and accessories to make

sure they fit in with your company's standards. You can note how other people in your department dress and aim to match that level of formality.

✚ Show your personality

Your clothing can be a way to show your unique personality. Even in a professional environment, you can differentiate yourself through colors, patterns and accessories. This can be especially meaningful in creative professions, like design.

✚ Confirm company policies for tattoos and body jewelry

If you have tattoos or body jewelry, review your organization's handbook or speak with your manager about these policies. You may need to choose clothing that covers your tattoos or remove your jewelry.

✚ Make thoughtful selections for casual days

Many offices have "casual Fridays" or other opportunities for employees to depart from their traditional business attire. Make careful selections for these days as you still want to project an image of confidence and professionalism. Your appearance should still be clean, neat, well-fitting and modest.

✚ Dress comfortably

Choose clothes that are comfortable and easy to move in so that you aren't distracted during the workday. For instance, if you need to spend much of your day standing, you should wear comfortable, supportive shoes.

✚ Plan appropriately for events

Even in more casual environments, there are some occasions when you should dress more formally, including:

- Networking events
- Meetings with clients or company executives
- Job interviews
- Sales visits
- Formal presentations or meetings that you're leading
- Company-sponsored events

You should also consider the following areas of your appearance:

✚ Nails: Keep nails trimmed and clean.

✚ Makeup: Opt for neutral makeup in corporate settings.

- Perfume or cologne: Choose light scents or avoid wearing perfume or cologne.

- Shoes: Make sure your shoes are clean and, if needed, polished.

- Breath: Use gum or mints to freshen your breath at work.

Remember….

The image you create is like your personal brand. It can often communicate a great deal about you to others who don't interact with you. Create a professional wardrobe that speaks to your goals, personality and creativity.

Thank you…

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