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Get and keep the job you want.

When giving keynote addresses, I'm often asked to include something about "dress for success." With the advent of workplace casual, many companies (and managers) find themselves faced with a wide variety of interpretations of what constitutes "casual" and are not sure how to bring it under control. Some firms are even swinging back to the requirement of more traditional business attire. Dressing for success in a workplace casual environment can be a little easier for men, but both men and women should not be lulled into a false sense of comfort when it comes to work appropriate dress. Here are some tips you might want to circulate among your staff to help them better understand what it takes to get and keep the jobs they want:

1. **Dress for the job you want, not the job you have.** Observe what successful people who are senior to you are wearing to work. This always provides a good guideline for how you should be dressing as well.
2. **Don't take your cues from the exceptions to the rule.** There are times when successful people senior to you dress inappropriately for their positions – and get away with it. These are *exceptions to the rule* and they're few and far between.
3. **Leave blue jeans, t-shirts, belly shirts, sneakers, mini-skirts, and sweat clothes home.** Unless the office is having a "clean up" day when you know you'll be getting dusty or dirty, this kind of clothing won't help you to get the position you want in the future. Even if you're not thinking of a promotion or transfer at the moment, it's never too early to dress for success.
4. **Wear something you would be comfortable in if the CEO dropped by your office.** Many times we dress one way, anticipating that we have no meetings or customers coming to the office, only to find the calendar changes. Don't be caught unaware – you may not wear the "sincere blue suit" you would wear to an important meeting, but you would want to look professionally attired if a last minute encounter with someone important was presented to you.
5. **Invest in your wardrobe.** Just as you invested in a college degree or specialized training, spending money on clothes that fit you well and make you feel proud to wear them is an investment in your future. If your budget is limited, make it a point to go to sales, premium outlets, or other stores that have name brand fashions at a discount – it really will pay off in the long-run.
6. **Good grooming is always in fashion.** It's not just the clothing itself that makes an impression on people, but it's whether your clothes are clean and pressed, if your shoes are polished, and if your hair is combed and styled for work as well. Take time to look in the mirror – twice – before you leave home.

Best regards,

Lois P. Frankel, Ph.D.