



EmpireCLS
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Why Dressing Well Can Increase a Personal Assistant's Income

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Clothes Make the Assistant

We're all aware that people typically form an opinion of an individual's character and professionalism within minutes, if not seconds. According to [career coach Cheryl Palmer](#), "although looking the part does not guarantee you a promotion, it does carry some weight in the process." Your employer needs to feel comfortable putting you in front of associates, from clients to investors to executive ground transportation vendors, as a representative of the organization. If your grooming or clothing choices leave anything to be desired, you shouldn't be surprised if you're relegated to behind-the-scenes administrative duties.

"The most basic mistake new employees make is under dressing," [states Randall Hansen, Business Professor at Stetson University](#). "If unsure, dress conservatively." Here are 7 reasons that dressing well likely matters more than most professionals realize:



1. Dressing Well Instills a Sense of Confidence

Investing in a high-quality professional wardrobe and an attractive haircut that's office-ready won't just improve your image to your associates. It will improve your confidence in yourself as a professional. [Scott Reeves, personal finance editor at Forbes](#), recommends that professionals look to their own experience for insight on just how much the clothes can improve an image: "Think of the number of times experts from opposing sides of an issue have made good points...but you remember what one said simply because that person was better dressed and came across better."

2. Your Responsibilities May Increase

With great responsibility comes more opportunity for being better paid. Try to present yourself in a way that's consistent with an executive's image: Impeccably groomed and well-dressed. Looking the part can mean you're better able to assume your executive's duties and be given responsibilities that are client-facing or otherwise essential to the company's image. In the words of executive coach [Lisa Quast](#), "If he or she doesn't think clients, customers, or a management team will take you seriously, you're not getting promoted."

3. Always Dress a Step Up

Certain industries have a reputation for dressing casually. If you're anticipating a meeting with clients who typically wear cargo shorts and flip flops, is it untoward to show up in a full suit? [Tom Searcy](#), a nationally-recognized expert on large account sales recommends that you always dress one step up from your prospects, but never two: "They wear sport coats without ties, you wear suits without ties." Searcy recommends against opting for a full casual suit if you're unsure of dress code guidelines or given the ambiguous directions of "business casual." Instead, he advises professionals to call the receptionist and ask for clarification on fitting in with their corporate culture.

4. The Right Look Isn't About Attracting Attention

The best professional look is about creating an image that doesn't overshadow or detract from the individual's skill set in any way. Dr. Hansen states: "Many recent college grads just have no understanding of a professional wardrobe...Some think because they look attractive when going out, the same clothes will work in a job interview." Size, color, fit, fabric and the season can all affect whether clothes look provocative or professional, chic or like they were borrowed from your much-larger roommate. No aspect of your clothing should look incongruous from the image you're trying to convey of an accomplished and highly effective professional.

As Mark Twain famously stated, "Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence in society." While his statement is decidedly tongue-in-cheek, understand that clothes of all type have influence. It's up to you to ensure that the lasting effect is entirely positive. A well-dressed individual takes care to choose clothes that are consistent with fashion, company culture, their body type and the person they hope to become.



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