

Forty-One Percent of U.S. Employers More Likely to Promote Employees Who Wear Professional Attire, Reveals CareerBuilder.com Survey

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If your wardrobe makes you an ideal contestant for a TV makeover show, you're probably wearing those clothes to work too; and that may not be in your best interest. A new CareerBuilder.com survey reports that 41 percent of employers state that people who dress better or more professionally tend to be promoted more often than others in their organization. The survey was conducted from February 11 through March 13, 2008 among 2,765 employers.

Financial services is one of the industries that place the most emphasis on professional dress, as 55 percent of them state that people who dress more professionally tend to be promoted more often than others in the organization. On the other hand, IT and manufacturing employers are two of the industries that place the least amount of emphasis on professional dress, as only 37 percent and 34 percent, respectively, said that employees who dress more professionally tend to be promoted more often than others.

"Even though we are seeing a trend of more relaxed dress codes in the office, especially in summer, it doesn't mean that professionalism should go out the window," said Rosemary Haefner, vice president of Human Resources for CareerBuilder.com. "How you dress can play an important role in how others perceive you at work, and dressing professionally can help you project a motivated and dedicated image."

Some workplaces have taken action into their own hands and are getting employees to dress more professionally by banning certain items of clothing and footwear. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of employers surveyed have banned flip flops, 49 percent have banned mini-skirts and 28 percent have banned jeans.

In addition to banning certain items of clothing, some employers have gone as far as to send employees home for unsuitable work attire. More than one-third (35 percent) of employers have sent someone home to change clothes because they were dressed inappropriately.

Not only does your appearance count once you get the job, but dressing professionally on an interview with potential employers is also important. Fifty-four percent of employers surveyed give greater weight to candidates who show up to interviews wearing a business suit than those who do not.

Haefner recommends the following tips for dressing professionally on the job:

- Stock your closet -- Start with the versatile basics, such as a pair of black pants, a dark pant suit, some button-down collared shirts and classic pair of dark shoes. Once you have the staples, you can continue to build your wardrobe to give you plenty of professional options.
- Keep it neat and clean -- Make sure your pants, shirts and other clothes are ironed, stain free and in good condition. When your clothes look sloppy, so do you.
- Steer clear of bar attire -- Don't mistake the office for your local watering hole. Leave the slinky shirts, tight pants and cut off t-shirts at home.
- Look the part -- Have a client presentation or a meeting with the CEO? Dress for the part, making sure you choose appropriate articles of clothing for your role.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder.com among 2,765 U.S. employers (employed full-time; not self-employed) ages 18 and over between February 11, and March 13, 2008, respectively. With a pure probability sample of 2,765 one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 1.9 percentage points. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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