

Tips for Implementing Successful Dress Code or Guidelines

Planning

Our experience has shown that business dress policies work best when planned and presented with a certain strategy. It is important to provide guidelines and set standards at an early stage to alleviate problems or concerns later on.

Guidelines

Using guidelines in a systematic approach rather than formal dress codes works best. Some employees may have negative feelings towards dress policies (involving extra cost, conformity and lack of empowerment). These can be defused by keeping the guidelines general, emphasizing customer service aspects, teamwork, providing a list of suggested clothing items and differentiating business casual wear and standard business wear.

Many companies include the phrase "dress appropriately" in their policies, which only serves to confuse employees as the word "appropriately" means different things to different people.

Training

We suggest holding seminars for employees to augment and re-enforce guidelines. They should be scheduled during work hours just as you would any other customer service training to establish that the company takes this aspect of customer service seriously. The seminars will not only address concerns, clear up issues, and re-enforce the guidelines with plenty of visuals, but should be presented to employees in a value added manner. They will stress cost-effectiveness, shopping and personal style information that will carry over to their personal lives (not just the business environment). Since we have no industry or product bias, our "achieving the look on a budget" is a very popular consumer segment of our presentation.

Management Leadership

Finally, we find that management leading by example significantly promotes the success of such programs. Managers must have a clear understanding of the policy and exemplify the dress guidelines. To this end, we suggest having a management seminar focusing on the underlying theory behind the guidelines, implementation, and possible concerns and coaching.

Business Casual /Business Dress Training Overview

We cover the major barriers to dress codes such as:

- Grooming and other sensitive issues, which are often difficult for managers and supervisors to address and can jeopardize working relationships. Managers do not have to act as the fashion police. We customize the seminar to cover problem areas without putting anyone on the spot.
- People don't understand how their image affects their dealings with customers (both internal and external). We demonstrate the impact of first impressions and how to use clothing as a powerful business tool.
- Many companies include the phrase dress appropriately in their policies, which is unclear to employees as the word "appropriate" means different things to different people. We assist companies in defining what appropriate means for their clients, their geographic area, industry and corporate culture.
- Some people feel that dress codes violate their personal style and restrict freedom of choice. We find that once employees understand that dressing appropriately is ultimately about showing respect to clients, there is a greater chance of buy-in and a lot less resistance.
- Cost and time issues. We provide consumer oriented information and show participants how to incorporate this into their personal lives, not just for work.
- We customize our presentations to suit each audience