

## Transcription - Knowing Your Personal Style

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Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsbortn and this is Inside Exec. Today we're going to talk about your personal style, particularly as it relates to what you wear because today, as we record, it's Melbourne Cup Day and we have both, in our travels to get to our recording destination, seen some interesting attire.

People were obviously going in to a work situation before they went off to the Melbourne Cup activities because they were obviously not in normal, going to work gear, probably going to lunch or some other sort of function.

That's what triggered the discussion, but we wanted to talk a bit more broadly about it being part of your personal style. It is an extension of a podcast where we talked about your digital image and so we're just extending that image and making sure that you are aware of what your personal profile is when we talk about clothing and about style.

For those of you who have had a look at my image on the website, you'll know that I have very distinctive hair and I've had my hair like this for probably well over 10 years. For me these days, I dress from the hair down. So I look at the color and I look at where I'm going and I'll think about what is appropriate for me for that function. Now often it means that I am in what you would consider a corporate suit. I have a dark suit and I wear a white shirt underneath it, but I'll dress it up with some little bit of color that coordinates with my hair or I'll have some special shoes that make me feel good but are hidden beneath the suit. I feel like my approach is appropriate for the occasion but I've got a little bit of me that is helping me through the day.

That style, my style, has taken a long time to develop and you need to work on it, you need to think about the colours that look good on you, the styles of clothing that look good on you and you can't follow the fashion trends, you can't follow what everyone else in the office is wearing. You really do need to develop your individual style because it's part of your presentation, it's part of how people judge you. You've got 90 seconds when they first meet you to work out how they're going to categorise you. So you need to be thinking about what is the impression that your clothes are going to give, as much as what you say.

So what we're hearing there is that you can have your own individual style, you can have a style that suits your personality but it's got to be also appropriate to time and place, whether it's in an office, whether it's the function, business function, to do with your work etc. That goes, everything we're saying here, goes for both male and female, because there are current styles as well, for men, whether you're looking at a hairstyle, whether you're looking at glasses, whether you're looking at dress up, dress down, whether you mix and match. It's not just black suits, white shirts and ties for men. There is a lot of variation on that and you want to pick the one that you want people to recognise as you and your personal brand. Your personal brand and image has, Kim said, she talked about the digital here, is about physical appearance and to remember that you will not turn up to work in your dressing gown and therefore there is time and place. So, the dressing gown is actually for the house and not for the office, you will wear a different outfit for gardening than you do for going out to a restaurant.

How would you know?

Yes, I don't do gardening!

And also the styles, as tempting as it is and as hard as it is, don't suit everyone, every current style and therefore you have to be a bit more creative by being yourself and ask for help. But all the time, I have no idea and I rely on people like Kim, my friends, my sister to help me look the best I can and work with what I've got. There's no harm in that. But just be aware about what damage you can cause your brand by dressing the wrong way.

I've seen both males and females going to work this morning. The way they were dressed was not appropriate for an office environment. It's not a judgment or anything, it's just us wondering would they look at the photo in a month's time and think, oh what was I thinking? And that's really all that matters. Their self image and they're thinking about themselves, not what other people are judging them by.

And also if you're turning up to a board meeting or to an executive meeting or if you're the leader of a team and you're turning up looking like a person that just came out from a forest cutting trees or whatever, that's not the image you want them to think of when they think of you and your presentation or your conversation or when they see you in the lift. They don't want to, unless you've been running and you're just coming back, they don't want to see you in a crumpled shirt and dirty shoes with holes in them, do they?

But then the dilemma for the people that we saw today was that the Melbourne Cup celebrations or Christmas party, whatever it is, but the work associated celebration activity creates confusion in their minds about what do I dress for? Because obviously they would be expected, I would think, to work this morning at least, before they went off to lunch or to their function and the afternoon. But to come in looking ready, as though you were going to the races, when you are going into a work environment and we're talking about Sydney city, so they're all going into office buildings, it's a bit disrespectful, I think, of the work environment because the message that I would get if I saw you come through the door is, well I'm not going to get any work out of them because they're ready for the party, they're not focused on work.

And really, as employers, managers, we're giving them the afternoon that will be non-productive time in terms of the usual output, it will be productive because they'll be socialising and interacting with one another. But obviously I can expect them to be productive this morning, so where is their respect for the fact that I have given them this afternoon activity? But they've come in this morning ready to party all day, that wasn't the agreement, that's not my understanding, that's not fair on my employment conditions. And in a personal sense, what was the person thinking when they got dressed? Their focus was obviously not on the work that they should have been doing in the morning, their focus was on the party in the afternoon. And so you've lost that person for the day, there is no productivity at all for the day. And that's the message that I'm getting from that behaviour of those clothes.

And as Fulyana said, I saw examples on the train this morning and my immediate reaction was, oh, it's Melbourne Cup Day, and that was my excuse for them. And I thought, why am I giving them an excuse? When really they're responsible adults, they want to create an image, many of them are probably in high-powered jobs. And they revert back to the weekend child,

for want of a better term, because they're going to a party.  
So let's get dressed up for the party.

When I was involved in the corporate world and we had Melbourne Cup Day, I would go in and work in the morning. And I would have things that I would put on with whatever I was wearing that would make it a special outfit for Melbourne Cup Day. So I'd make special hats. I'd have different shoes I'd put on. I'd have a different coat I'd put on. I would have whatever it was, but it changed what I wore because when I went in in the morning, I wanted to know that I was going to work. And then when lunchtime came, I'd put on the other costume and become the Melbourne Cup attendee.

And that's a process that worked for me. That won't necessarily work for everyone but it's about being responsible and about managing your profile. I think if you're managing yourself, you would see that that would be an approach that you should take. It shouldn't just be easier for me to be dressed up because it's Melbourne Cup Day.

What you're saying is it's easier for me to focus on the afternoon because I'm really not intending to do anything this morning. So yes, appropriate, still have fun. It doesn't stop you having fun and being dressed for the occasion, but be appropriate and be happy with it in the years to come, in the months to come when you reflect back and you're seeing you think, "Yeah, I was happy with that." rather than cringe and say "I shouldn't have, what was I thinking?" That's all.

The overriding message from today is not about inappropriate dressing for Melbourne Cup, but it's about you looking at your personal style, what you're comfortable in, what you can work in, what reflects the responsibility that you have in the position that you are in and that suits you. So you don't have to have this massive wardrobe that just bulges at the seams because you buy things thinking, "Oh, that'll work, or I can wear that for this activity." Look sensibly at what combinations of things that you can work with that will add to your personal style.

So there we have it. What to wear tomorrow? I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.