



BY SARA CANUSO

Are You Guilty of a Color Malfunction?

The Color of Your Clothing May Have More Impact Than You Suspect

They say — never really sure of who the “they” are — the colors you wear effect the way you feel and how other people perceive you. I never paid much attention to such talk until I was given a gift to have “my” colors done. What I saw before my eyes made me give plenty of thought as to what colors I put on to start each day.

I was classified as “Autumn,” which meant I was able to wear all the colors related to the fall. For years, wearing my colors became a natural part of getting dressed in the morning — until one morning I decided to go over the rainbow of colors and do some investigating.

In my profession as a custom clothier, my job is to service people with their business, casual, and formal clothing in the convenience of their office or home. Being married to a lawyer and having a father-in-law who was a judge, in addition to a brother-in-law, nieces and several other family members in the field of law, I was drawn to contact local law firms in search of clients. As I did, my plan to sell clothing became more about selling image, confidence, power and presence. After reading surveys, attending meetings, and listening to what “they” said, the following is what I have found about color malfunction.

Months of anticipation, weeks of preparation, hours of brain freeze — and in only four seconds you are judged on just what kind of lawyer you are. You see, when you walk into a room to do a presentation or appear before a jury, your appearance creates your audience’s first thoughts of you. In surveying jurors, I was told that the attorneys with navy suits seem to be more caring about their clients and their cases. A bright tie will hold the attention of the jury while it is being addressed. Even wearing a monogrammed shirt is seen as a sign that the attorney is smarter.

Remember, we never get a second chance to make a first impression, so being aware of that first impression is critical.

To help with understanding the importance of colors, I have listed certain hues to be worn on various occasions. You should visualize the suit as a frame, the shirt as the canvas and (for the guys) the tie as the piece of art. For example, you can wear the same color suit in meeting with a client, but pair it with a different color shirt and tie, and it will have a totally different look. Men, pay more attention when buying ties, as they are to you what jewelry is to women. Ladies, when wearing a suit, try adding a pin — always on the right lapel — or a scarf to act as an accent piece. Additionally, a blouse with French cuffs will add a special touch that will truly be noticed.

COLOR COUNTS

Think about those days when everyone compliments you on how great you look. You feel good, and as a result, your confidence

soars. On other days, it seems that people are asking if you feel alright. Once again, it is the color factor.

When building your wardrobe, I would highly recommend starting with one suit each in solid navy blue, navy stripe, solid charcoal gray and a charcoal stripe. This will carry you through most occasions.

You may be thinking that I forgot about the black suit. Everyone should have a black suit. It is great for business as well as evening and social activity where a suit would be required, like a wedding, bar mitzvah or dinner with an important client.

Follow the guide below so you won’t be accused of color malfunction.

Navy blue: Navy is commonly acknowledged to be a warmer, friendlier and likeable color. A navy striped suit should also be a part of your wardrobe, to be worn when you want to have a commanding presence. Wear navy on for the following occasions:

- Opening statements for a trial;
- Meeting a client for the first time;
- Conducting a meeting for all of the partners; or
- To a banquet in recognition of you or a colleague.

Charcoal gray: Charcoal is known as a stronger color, which could help you make an impact in closings and occasions for persuasion. A charcoal striped suit should also be a part of your wardrobe. Put on your gray suit for the following:

- Closing statements;
- Pushing for policy change;
- Visiting with a potential client for the second time; or
- Meeting with your opponent’s attorney to try to settle out of court.

A blue/gray suit should be worn to:

- Visit a client out of town;
- Meet in the firm over administrative details; or
- Wear the day you cannot remember what I recommend.

You can also wear a black or white suit for the following days:

- Detail day in the office;
- Casual day for staff but not lawyers; or
- The end of the week.

And finally, the earth tones, like cream, beige, brown or tan. Wear earth tones on the following occasions:

- Visiting a client when you have just lost a case;
- Depositions;
- Meeting with an associate; or
- Having a meeting with your team.

Now we speak of “business casual.” My question is, what is so casual about your business? A client is hiring you for your expertise, so don’t have them wondering if you were just out playing basketball or rak-



ing the leaves.

Clients today are more likely to shop around, so it is imperative that you understand that first impressions are of greater importance than 10 years ago. I was once told by a client of mine that she had inherited a large sum of money. When she was interviewing financial advisers, she said, she came upon a man who came highly recommended — but she could not hear a word, because all she could do was to look at his wrinkled, worn-out suit and greasy hair. Her thoughts were if he could not take care of himself, how was he going to take

care of her money?

The bottom line is that today’s workplace is ever-changing. The image you project is your most visible and valuable asset. Take the time to develop a presence by attiring yourself, and your confidence will come with ease and have a favorable effect on those around you. People will be drawn to you and want to be a part of this presence, resulting in more referrals for you, which leads to more business, which results in more income. One of the safest investments with the highest return is the time you invest in yourself. So take yourself over that rainbow. •



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