

Dress for success: a necessary indulgence

It's true. Dressing well is a necessity if one desires to be successful. Naked people have very few opportunities for promotion or elevation of social status in mainstream society.

However, whoever invented clothing obviously favored women over men. For instance, women got high-heeled shoes. Let's face it: women look great in high heels. Even if they wear nothing else, in the right pair of high heels, they look fabulous.

What did men get? We got wingtips. I don't care if a man wears a \$5,000 suit. If he wears wingtips, he just looks like a clod wearing a \$5,000 suit with clunky old wingtips. Don't even think about what he looks like wearing nothing else. Not that I think men should be wearing high-heeled anything, but let's be honest, wingtips are really ugly.

Women also have attractive form-fitting fashions. Even if a woman is, shall we say, on the Rubenesque side, to be polite. If her clothing is a bit tight, she looks wonderful. According to statistics revealed by our astute research department, 60 percent of men are somewhat portly. If we wear form-fitting clothing, we just look like 10 pounds of quivering, gelatinous fat in a 5-pound bag.

While women get good-looking, form-fitting clothing, what do men get? We get — the tie. That's right, the tie — without a doubt the most useless, dumbest article of clothing ever conceived by the human brain. It does nothing but hang around the neck, feel uncomfortable, and look ridiculous. The thing doesn't even have pockets. And in today's market, spending several hundred dollars for one of these annoying accessories of sartorial splendor is a common occurrence.

I suppose we should blame King Louis XIV for this fashionable catastrophe. He took up the practice of wearing neckerchiefs



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

after seeing them on victorious Croatian mercenaries during the Thirty Years War.

Immediately following the wars, the style of silk neck scarves in vibrant colors became the height of fashion. Eventually, after an evolution that included a variety of other impenetrable garments, the four-in-hand was born in the 1860s, itself a product of a modern lifestyle brought about by the Industrial Revolution, and the dressed-up work force's need for simpler garb.

The tie as we know it today, however, has been around since the 1920s. Unlike its progenitors, which warmed the neck, or simply made a fashion statement, the late 19th-century variety served the purpose of showing the wearer's affiliations.

When English public schools increased in number during the late 19th century, sporting colors became de rigueur. At first, supporters wore school colors on hatbands around boaters, but eventually someone started the practice of putting the stripes around the neck. The old school tie was born, and with it, the beginning of modern neckwear.

Then in the 1980s, U.S. President Ronald Reagan introduced the country to his red power tie, as much a virility symbol in American corporate culture as a red convertible has been in the culture at large. After the power tie, the power suit and the power lunch soon followed.

Although the aforementioned are allegedly out of fashion, they still exist, thinly disguised as contrasting neckwear to upscale busi-

ness attire, and business lunches, which are coming back as budgets get roomier and sales prospects become rosier.

The idea is to overwhelm your client by dressing better, living better, and outdistancing him with a higher ideology. Wear a \$2,000 suit, a \$300 tie, \$500 shoes, take him to lunch at a high-toned restaurant where the waiter addresses you by name and takes you to "your" table while other customers are waiting in line gawking, and the prospective client might have difficulty competing. Now you can spin the sale to such a degree that the prospect will be on the verge of begging to become a client because your firm doesn't do business with "just anybody." This holds true even if it is total fiction.

So, if this is the regimen of the most basic workings of the world of business, I'm afraid the male half of society is stuck with making absurd fashion statements for some time to come. Women will continue to out-fashion us with imagination, innovation, and high style.

Strip humanity naked and you might get a glimpse of true equality. However, the moment one person dons so much as a feather as a symbol of distinction, you have the fundamental ingredients for the making of a kingdom.

In the inimitable words of Mark Twain, "No great title is efficient without clothes to support it." It's another part of a system that we just can't understand.

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