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# What to Wear to Work

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# The Team Didn't Gel!
## Getting Teams to Work Together to Deliver Results

by Lonnie Pacelli

*Making Beautiful Music Together...*
I played the drums as a kid starting in 4th grade up into college. My family suffered through many hours (and headaches) of me beating the skins to jazz, funk, and rock music. When I started playing with the school band, I had to learn that making music wasn't about how fast I could do flam-a-diddles or how loud I could play, but how I played in relation to the other band members. If the music called for adagio (slow & leisurely pace) it would be a bad idea to break into an In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida drum solo while everyone else is playing elevator music. The important thing was to match my playing to the other instrumentalists and to make beautiful music together. While I never got to rock stardom with my own entourage and groupies, I did learn that music is about how the entire band sounds not any individual player.

By now you're probably wondering why I took a mental trip to Tahiti to tell you of my musical aspirations. To me, a well structured project team where each team member understands their role in making the project successful is like the musicians playing in a band. Each project team member knows what they need to contribute to the project, knows when they have to perform, understands what other project team members are doing on the project, and knows what it takes to be successful. Just as important, each of the project team members help each other to ensure overall project success.
*How it happens*

There was not a clear project organization with clearly defined roles -

This goes beyond a hierarchy chart. Each person needs to know what function they play on the team, how they fit into the other functions, and what happens if they don't do their job.

Depending on your industry or functional discipline, there may be standard or customary roles that you employ on your project. There are a few things that I have learned, though, about project standard roles as follows:

Start with the standard or customary roles that are typical for your type of projects
If the project need warrants a special role which is outside of standard, then create a special role
If the project doesn't need a standard or customary role, then eliminate the role

These may sound like overly simplistic statements, but I've been amazed over the years with seeing cumbersome project role structures because the project manager was reluctant to deviate from standard project roles. As experienced project managers, our job first and foremost is to make sure that the right people are assigned to do the right tasks to produce the right result at the right time. At the end of the day, I've never been graded on how well I adhered to a standard project role structure; I've been graded on results.

If the project environment doesn't have standard or customary project roles or if I'm taking on a unique type of project, then I like to take a very pragmatic approach to role definition, as follows:

- **Define the 3-6 things on the project that I am most concerned about or pose the greatest risk to me**
- **Create roles that encompass the concern or risk areas**
- **Cross-check the roles with the work that needs to be done in the project schedule to ensure that all of the major roles are being defined correctly**

# TRAINING

By doing this, I am addressing concern or risk areas head-on by defining a role with a singular point of accountability to manage the areas of my project that are most likely to fail. This technique has helped me on more than one project to sleep better knowing that I had my most crucial areas covered.

**The team finger pointed and fought in public -**
On any project you do, so long as there is more than one person involved, there are going to be lively discussions. When this happens, it is very likely that something good will come of the discussion and that in some way the project will move one step closer to the finish line as a result. On past projects I have managed, I was very deliberate about letting these discussions happen and in letting team members question each other. I did put a few rules in place, though:

- It's very cool to challenge and stretch, but once we make a decision we need to get behind it as a team
- What happens in the room stays in the room; outside of the room we are a unified team
- If we made a wrong decision we accept the decision as a team; no finger pointing allowed
- We focus on the problem and not the person; don't make the problem personal

So, were the rules followed 100% of the time? Sadly, no (myself included). After all, we are human. However, you should still strive to get some ground rules in place to avoid team strife where you can.

**There was no "rallying cry" -**
You can look at many major successful campaigns and pull some slogans from them which embodied the message behind the slogan; "Where's the beef," "Milk, it does a body good," and "Plop, plop, fizz, fizz" are all unifying messages that cause you to think about a product. Similarly, when driving a project it helps the team to have some kind of a rallying cry or mantra that the team embodies when driving work. On one project, we wanted to be extremely cautious of not over-designing a solution and putting too many bells and whistles in to help us keep our costs down. We started using a "good enough" rallying cry during the design phase to be a continual reminder that we wanted to not overdo the solution. It worked incredibly well because the team would critically question itself with "is this good enough?" when looking at the architecture and functionality. Aside from helping to make sure our solution was cost effective, the rallying cry helped the team to better bond.

**Team members weren't held accountable for delivery -**
With project teams, I firmly believe that each role needs to clearly understand what they need to do, when they need it by, and how their work fits into the big picture. I also firmly believe the project team isn't only accountable to the project manager; they are accountable to each other since if any of the other roles fail the entire team fails. Given so, it is vitally important for each role to be visible as to what each other role is doing for the following reasons:

- Each role should be continually looking at other work that is happening to ensure that they know if and how they fit into the other work
- Each role should feel that if they miss a deadline or do not perform their job adequately, they are letting down the team as a whole, not just the project manager.
- Meeting or missing deadlines and deliverables are a team issue and should be exposed to the team.

The point here is accountability. Each member needs to feel accountable for their work and needs to experience the joy of success as well as the discomfort of failure. The project manager needs to use discretion on making sure that things do stay constructive. Focus should be very much on how the team gets things back on track and moving forward versus badgering the team member.

In some instances, though, you may just have someone in a job who is not suited to perform. The project manager needs to deal with those situations swiftly because if he or she doesn't, he or she is not doing his job, nor are they being accountable to the team by dealing with a problem performer.

**The project manager wasn't suited for the job -**
The project's needs and criticality to the business will be key drivers in the required experience level of the project manager. For relatively simple projects you may be able to staff the project with an inexperienced project manager with

a more seasoned project manager serving as an occasional mentor. As projects increase in complexity and criticality to the business, though, there's no substitute for an experienced, seasoned project manager.

I've been incredibly fortunate to have worked with some outstanding project managers over the years. In thinking about the best project managers, they've had the following things in common:

- They knew the techniques of project management cold
- They knew (through experience) where they could bend the rules on the techniques to be able to buy time or be more efficient
- They always kept things moving forward
- They knew when to shift from "let's discuss" mode to "let's decide" mode
- They held others accountable to do their jobs
- They praised success
- They were excellent communicators
- They took the heat for the team when external criticism happened
- They were calm and focused when things started going bad on a project and everyone else was wigging out

I know of no magic formula for fitting the project manager for the job; what I can say is you're better to err on having an over-experienced project manager versus an under-experienced one. I knew of a very gung-ho young project manager (let's just call him "Author") who felt he was

an outstanding project manager because he knew the techniques well (cost and schedule management, status reporting, etc.).

Because Author knew the techniques, he felt he could simultaneously take on three complex projects which really should have each had a dedicated project manager. Not only did Author learn some very valuable lessons, he unfortunately also cost his company a lot of money because others had to come in and mop up his mess. Both Author and I can't stress enough to make sure your project manager is suited for the job.

**The team didn't celebrate wins -**
Driving through a project is tough work. It is incredibly easy for people to get discouraged whenever the team hits roadblocks or has setbacks. It is vitally important for a team to celebrate hitting key milestones simply to keep morale up and keep project momentum. I'm not talking about three-day cruise type celebrations; it could be as simple as bringing in pizza or cake or something that allows people to let their hair down and take a bit of a breather. I would caution you about doing this too much; doing too much celebration lessens the effect of the celebration and could actually annoy your team members. I was on one project where people did not like the morale events because it only meant that they had to stay later that evening to get their work done. So, celebrate, but do it in moderation. Warning Signs

**The team shows confusion about who is doing what -**
Confusion can exist either due to poor communication on who is responsible for what tasks or because tasks can reside under the responsibility of more than one role. It's important not only to get people to agree on areas of responsibility, but to ensure that the responsibilities are clearly documented and communicated to the entire project team. Also, be prepared to pull this document out and remind the team of its respective responsibilities as confusion creeps back into the project team.

**Discussions are destructive and unproductive -**
You know what this looks like; if you're team can't have discussions without getting personal, derogatory, or outright mean this is a pretty clear sign you're not gelling as a team. The project team doesn't have to be best friends with each other, but they should at least respect what each other brings to the table.

**Team members aren't helping each other -**
I've actually been in some environments as a consultant where some team members enjoyed seeing other team members fail and did absolutely nothing to help them for the good of the project. Project team members that carry an "every person for themselves" kind of attitude are not going to perform anywhere near their full potential.

***Turning it around***
**Clarify the confusion -**

Get team members locked in a room and hammer this out. If you get stuck on a particularly contentious area or if you see tempers flaring, set it aside and work on other things, then come back to the contentious area. Make sure that responsibilities are documented and clearly accessible for all members.

**Address the problem team member -**
Never a pleasant task, but I on more than one occasion have had a project team member taken off the project because they simply were going to remain a destructive force on the project. At the same time, I've also been able to turn a destructive situation around. In either event, address the issue swiftly before it does further damage to the rest of the project team.

**Co-locate the team -**
I've had some of my greatest successes where

the project team was physically located in the same area and had minimal physical barriers to inhibit communication. This may or may not be entirely possible depending on your project, but where you have the opportunity to co-locate team members strongly consider doing so.

### Go out for a milkshake -

Sometimes it's great to just get people away from their work environment and socialize over a favorite food and beverage. As a consultant on out-of-town projects, our project teams were typically very effective because we had more time to socialize and bond during non work hours. Getting to know each other a bit and being able to laugh as a team will pay huge dividends in overall team effectiveness.

### All work and no play... -

... makes for a really dull and demotivating project. Take some time out of the project to have a laugh. I have certainly been known to play an occasional practical joke on a project or to bring some occasional levity to a particularly stressful time in a project. Just be careful that the use of humor isn't too excessive or inappropriate; but by all means make sure that you share a laugh or two even if it's at your expense.

### Be the unifier -

As the project manager, you are expected to take responsibility for getting the team to gel and to know the barriers that exist which are preventing the team from being a highly cohesive, collaborative, high-performance team. At times it's likely to be the most uncomfortable part of your job, but it can also be one of the most rewarding when done well.

### *Take aways*

- Define a clear project organization with clearly defined roles
- Be a team through thick and thin; don't publicly finger-point when things start going south
- Develop a "rallying cry" which focuses the team on the mission
- Let the team members do their job but hold them accountable for results and dates
- Make sure you have a project manager that who is appropriately seasoned for the project
- Celebrate the wins as a team 🅰

*Lonnie Pacelli is an accomplished author and autism advocate with over 30 years experience in leadership and project management at Accenture, Microsoft, and Consetta Group. See books, articles, keynotes, and self-study seminars at http://www.lonniepacelli.com*

# Pens Should Be Simple
## - Ballpoints Are Not Rocket Science

by Steven Lay

**F**or many years I have bought pens I refer to as "non-statement" pens, and put them everywhere; in my cars, bedside, in all my coat/jacket pockets, in the spiral binding on my journal, golf bag and of course my office. From buying lots of pens I formed opinions about what ones are the best for my use. I like fountain pens too, but those are a different subject and they are really not practical for every application. ⏩

I have "statement pens" such as Lamy, Monte Blanc and Pelican that I like for high level meetings and signing documents (fountain pens primarily) but now I want to address some top-of-the-mind considerations in selecting economical, workhorse, office pens that you don't mind being a little rough with.

It may be ridiculous to most, but pens are very personal tools for writing in business and for casual use. We all write letters, sign credit card receipts, we may keep logs and journal entries, etc. Sometimes we use pens for tools and sundry chores for which they were not intended; they may be abused is my point.

I want to bring the simple task of pen selection to a slightly higher level of consciousness. Here are some of my considerations when buying a new style pen. Bear in mind that the real task of a pen is to simply put ink on paper concisely, but still the process needs to be enjoyable and comfortable; it's just nice to see something written with clean lines and might also communicate a subliminal message about your style; nice colored ink, no blobs, no smudges and the right thickness of ink.

Basically, there are 4 bottom-line considerations: the tactile aspect, look of the pen (the barrel), mechanicals (retractable or twist style), the ink formulation and how it performs relative to your needs, paper you write on, preferences, and the refill/cartridge design that comes with the pen.

Probably in the end you are only interested in getting an impression or line of link on paper. Here are some of the attributes you might consider when looking for an everyday yeoman's type pen-ballpoint, gel, or rollerball.

Look and Feel

How does it feel in your hand and specifically, how does it feel in the writing position? Some pens are fat and some thin and this is the first thing you will notice.

- **Texture-because some people's hand/fingers get oily or feel like they perspire, some kind of texturing in the area where you hold the pen is desirable. Smooth barrels tend to slip between the fingers during use.**
- **In the area where you hold the pen, is there a contour that naturally fits the fingers or is it perfectly round? The reason to consider this is, a pocket clip rubbing against the hand during writing can become annoying.**
- **Metal versus plastic-some all metal pens are heavier; that may be positive.**
- **Appoints-Most pens are all plastic and some come with chrome finished clips, silver tips and silver retractable plunger mechanisms. I get selective relative to the color of the barrel.**
- **Stick versus retractable pens-often a stick pen is what is called for, especially with a cap closure.**
- Size of the refills/ink cartridge-I have one pen that is 0.30 mm and I never use it because of **the width of the line and also a wimpy line of ink is not the image I want. Conversely, when I proof read documents I like a stick pen, red or burgundy ink color, and a 0.50 mm ink line.**
- **Writing environment-consider if you write in bed, in cold, or in damp weather. If you write in such**

environments you will be limiting your choices to 3 or 4 manufacturers who put out pens capable of writing in these conditions and angles.

## INK ⌄

Look and feel is only half of the equation, what about the ink and how that ink looks on paper? Ink color-I am in a wine related business and I like to write with burgundy colored ink. Some pens do not come in ink colors and yes, some pens do come with colored ink (in new pens) but they do not sell refills of that original color-go figure.

- **Color-I prefer blue and burgundy colored ink. In companies they specify use of a certain color ink. For example, black ink shows up better when copying documents. Personally, I do not like black ink and is less impressionable.**
- **Styles-today pen manufacturers offer: ballpoint pen ink, gel, and a new emulsion type ink.** Ballpoint inks have evolved and come in multiple colors, they dry quickly and the ink flows well.

This latter point can also become a problem; the newer ballpoint ink formulations can leave blobs and bleed. Some new ballpoint pens also offer little resistance on the paper when writing as new ballpoint inks flow so smoothly. Some people like the positive feedback with a slight drag on paper.

- **Gels don't seem to be bold in color. In addition, with gel and emulsion inks, the ink seems to dry on the tip relatively quickly and when you start writing after a lengthy pause the ink is dry and the line of ink** tends to skip or leave voids until the flow resumes.
- **Emulsions still tend to have a bleed through issue with certain paper and colored ink selections**.

Gels and Emulsions type inks I do not enjoy because they write with a gliding sensation. I like a pen that has a little bit of paper drag to them allowing me to be a little more deliberate in my writing style.

## REFILL/CARTRIDGE ⌄

A common problem with all manufacturers is that some ink cartridges/tubes leave huge blobs of ink when writing cursively. Looping letters such as "S's" or "T's" are especially prone to lay down a thick blob where the pen changes direction quickly and does not dry quickly. Lefties are left with smudges.

Some pen designs made by major mass market manufacturers use proprietary refill designs for each style pen they make-gel, ballpoint, roller ball. One manufacture uses the Parker design refill for their pen refills but use a proprietary technology to put the ink under pressure to allow it to write in cold, heat, on damp surfaces and upside down.

The ink reservoir/refill/cartridge unit (whatever nomenclature you prefer) is the mechanism that contacts the paper to apply the ink. Often times a brand, or a style within the brand, has the refill that will drag, scratch or dig into the paper which causes the ink to seriously skip and leave a scratch mark on the paper. If you

can live with that then no real issue.

An equally serious issue with some refills and their ink is that the ink will simply not get used up. Some of my refills still have tubes half full of ink that will not dispense. Even with some manipulation such as using hair dryers or running hot water over the ink tube, the ink simply will not start running again.

Interestingly, most mass market pens are manufactured in Japan. Brands such as Uni-ball, Zebra, Pentel, and Pilot are all Japanese brands. Bic owns many styles of ballpoint pens. If you include high-end pens and fountain pen manufacturers worldwide, there are about 115 manufacturers of all varieties of pens. It seems that some of the manufacturers have been around since the late 1800's.

Personally I like smaller diameter pens, plastic or metal barrels, click retractable, burgundy and blue ballpoint ink, a refill with a 0.7 mm thickness ink tip, rubberized or textured grip and a metal pocket clip. I have found that all pens (ballpoint, gel or new emulsion inks) will skip and leave blobs of ink on paper. The one that fits my style best today are some of the Zebra styles.

Mass market pens are priced as high as $8.00 and as little as $0.50. But, I do remember when Bic ballpoint pens sold for $0.25 each, we called them Bic Bananas. For business purposes, pens are a standard promo product with personalized imprints. Some of these pens offer a very nice feel and quality of writing. There are hundreds of shapes and sizes of these promo pens and most can be had from $0.35 each to $2.50 each with advertising imprints with quantity orders.

Office supply chains do carry a vast supply of pens but they are bundled with multiple colors and quantities in a package. Yet some stores also have manufacture displays where you can try out pens. Personally, I have now reverted to going on-line to see available pens and read reviews. But if you think you are odd to be interested in a simple mass market pen, just check out pen blogs on-line; there are a plethora of blogs that focus on most all types of writing instruments, even the cheap "everyday" models.

Good hunting for that everyday pen that is your personal favorite that writes in a style that suits you.

*Steven S. Lay has been in the travel and corporate meetings business for 30 years and is now focused exclusively on small luxury corporate gatherings in Wine Country. More information about his company, Symtrek Partners, is available at: http://www.symtrekpartners.com Symtrek Partners is a resource to any company contemplating a highly effective meeting, event or function for a small corporate group. Symtrek Partners is very interested in discussing ideas and options. To initiate a contact e-mail: stevelay@symtrekpartners.com or call 707-927-4205*

# 5 Strategies to Avoid Negative Effects of Prolonged Sitting at Work

by Dulce J Lerma

I started working in an office 5 years ago, and during the past two years I have started to suffer a few consequences of bad habits that can were formed while sitting at a desk for 8 hours a day. ▸▸

The reality is that a large amount of people work office jobs these days, and a lot of them do not correlate their type of work with their health condition. It is hard to change the way society works and avoid working office jobs altogether, as we often don't have that choice. However, we do have the choice of making a few adjustments at work that will allow us to prevent illnesses and health issues caused by sitting at your job for long hours each day.

In my case, I exercise very regularity, and always have made a decent effort to eat healthy. However, the past two years a few health issues have started to manifest, and it took some digging to find out the root causes. I started to develop a lot of gastrointestinal problems, and inability to breathe properly. I had to make a conscious effort to intake enough oxygen, as I often felt as if I was choking.

I also noticed that I started to hunch over when I walked and even after doing yoga I had a hard time standing straight without effort. My spine started to feel weak, and I experienced a lot of back pain.

When I visited a chiropractor, I discovered that a bad posture when sitting at my desk, plus not breathing properly had compressed some vertebrae in my spine, and had shifted my stomach in a way that impeded proper emptying into the small intestine. A series of chiropractic sessions and dietary adjustment made a lot of

improvement, and now I make a conscious effort to breathe deeply throughout the day and to have a correct posture while sitting at my desk, so that the problem does not come back. A very well researched article by Dr. Mercola discusses part of the controversy about the negative effects of sitting for prolonged hours and whether or not standing at your desk is better that sitting. The article also mentions several studies that point at a variety of negative health effects that can result from sitting more than 7 hours a day.

I won't discuss the details of those studies, but I will share with you the most important piece of information.

The bottom line as the article suggests is that the overall lack of movement might be the most detrimental issue for health, whether it is from standing or sitting; that said, it is important to mention that when you stand at your desk you are likely to get a lot more movement that when sitting, and I can attest to that because I tried standing at my desk for a while, and I did naturally move a lot more; I took some steps to reach things, I moved from leg to leg, and I changed my posture several times while standing, which increases the amount of overall movement in a day. I also felt more alert and less tired during the day. Standing is also a weight bearing posture which is beneficial for musculature and bone density.

Nevertheless, while standing might have less disadvantages that sitting, I agree with Dr. James Levine author of the book Get Up!: Why Your Chair Is Killing You and What You Can Do About It in that the emphasis should be on increasing movement of the body throughout the day rather than on simply switching from sitting to standing.

That said, if you decide to try standing at your desk I strongly recommend that you position your screen, and keyboard at the right level to avoid developing issues, as a bad standing posture can be as harming as a sitting posture.

As someone who works a full time office job, but who is also committed to improve my health and prevent future health issues, for the past year I have tried several strategies in order to reduce sitting time, and more importantly to increase the amount of movement of my body on any given day at the office, which has also helped me in my weight loss efforts.

Today I want to share with you some of the strategies I have implemented, and that have made a big difference in improving and relieving neck and back pain, indigestion, muscle soreness, and general energy levels.

**1. Change positions several times throughout the day.**
For this, I Set a timer on my phone or computer to go off every 25 minutes, because it is very easy to get carried away with work, and before you know it 2 hours have gone by.

Dr. Mercola recommends to not sit for more than 20 minutes at a time. This might be a big compromise for a lot of people, depending on where you work. If you are lucky and have your own private office like me, this will be feasible if you are determined. I change positions every 25 minutes most of the time, and move for 2 minutes every time.

If you share office space or have a time of job where it is impossible to stand every 20 minutes, don't worry! The point is to increase movement in general, so you will still benefit from changing positions in longer intervals.

How changing positions looks like? When your alarm goes off, stand up, walk around your own office, walk to the printer, walk to the water dispenser, walk around the hallway, do stretches, squats, walk in place, and roll your wrists, your ankles, do some standing yoga poses, anything that moves your body will benefit you.

If you are not able to stand up and move around, you can practice extending your legs while seated, do the rolling of the wrists, ankles, stretch your neck, etc.

You can also try sitting on an exercise ball and switch between that and your regular chair, like I do.

Trust me, I understand this is challenging in today's world, but if you are serious about your health and understand that you are your first priority, you will make it happen!

**2. Take deep breaths throughout the day.** Breathe into your diaphragm, expand your chest, and ribcage to ensure adequate oxygen intake. This can also help you improve your posture, because it is hard to breathe deeply when you are slouching at your chair. Breathing deeply will also force you to keep your back straight.

**3. Take a walk during your lunch break and/or coffee breaks**. Your breaks are the best opportunity to get more movement in. Make a conscious effort to go out for a walk instead of staying in your office to read news or sitting in the lunch room. This is also extremely beneficial to give your brain a break, sometimes we come back with a much clearer mind and new ideas on how to solve problems.

Even if you walk only 20 minutes a day every day you work, and you work about 20 days a week like most people, you will put in 400 minutes of walking every month! That is 6.6 hours! That your body will thank you for.

Don't underestimate the power of walking. It is a great weight-bearing exercise that the body was built to do!

**4. Mindful Eating**
Usually, People who work office jobs, myself included, have much more opportunities to eat throughout the day, than say, constructions

workers, and yet us office workers move a lot less and therefore require less energy. You see the problem?

Food is comforting when we are stressed out, and even entertaining when we are bored, but eating under those circumstances can potentially lead us towards making bad eating choices or eating more than needed.

We must be aware of our emotional state before reaching for a snack. It takes awareness of your body to know how you feel and understanding your choices. However, as a rule of thumb it is better not to eat when you are under stress. Take a few minutes to calm down and ask your body: what will really nourish me right now? Sometimes a few deep breaths or a walk are much more relieving in the long term than food.

Recognizing when we are bored is important to avoid eating out of boredom. This happened to me a lot, when work started to be a bit daunting, I used to go to the nearest bakery as a way of having some distraction, and I would buy a pastry even though I wasn't really craving it. Eventually, I noticed some weight gain after a few trips to the bakery!

Now I recognize when I am bored, or tired and I pay attention to my choices. I try to read an article instead or just go for the walk, pass by the bakery but don't stop by. Usually after a walk I will have a better idea whether I am hungry or not.

Bottom line: Eat when you are hungry, not when you are bored, stressed or tired.

**5. Proper Posture.** Whether you sit or stand at your desk, ensuring that you have the correct posture will prevent a lot of pain and discomfort. There are several resources on the internet that you can use as a guide.

Some suggestions to always keep in mind are: Avoid slouching, sitting cross legged, cradling the phone, and shrugging your shoulders.

Remember that when it comes to avoiding health problems from working at a desk, the key is to improve posture, and increase movement throughout the day.

*Reference: http://fitness.mercola.com/sites/ fitness/archive/2015/10/30/prolonged- sitting-health-risks.aspx*

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# What to Wear to Work:
## Your Guide to a Casual Dress Code and More

by Brandi Britton, OfficeTeam

Today's business dress code isn't your grandfather's dress code. Guidelines for office attire vary wildly in the professional world and can be difficult to navigate. To add to the confusion, attitudes are constantly changing.  ▸▸

How do you know what's acceptable to wear to your workplace? The decision can be particularly knotty when you're starting at a new job as an administrative professional or if you're aiming to get a promotion.

Read on for a rundown on the latest attitudes, different types of office attire and tips for looking your professional best.

## EVOLUTION OF THE CASUAL DRESS CODE ⌄

In an OfficeTeam survey (http://officeteam.rhi. mediaroom.com/index.php?s=247&item=1761), 50 percent of senior managers said employees dress less formally than they did five years ago. According to that same research, respondents identified wearing overly casual clothing as the most common dress code violation at work (47 percent), followed by showing too much skin (32 percent).

In addition, nearly one-third (31 percent) of office workers stated they would prefer to be at a company with a business casual dress code; 27 percent favor a casual dress code or no dress code at all.

## CATEGORIES OF OFFICE ATTIRE ⌄

There are several types of dress codes. Besides the ambiguity in each category's definition, some also have different names, which adds to the confusion. Here's an overview:

- **Business professional or formal.** This is the most formal level, often found in financial services, law firms and executive boardrooms. Men normally wear white dress shirts and dark suits — either two or three pieces. Ties are modest in both color and style, with dark socks and lace-up shoes as safe choices for footwear. Women wear skirt suits or pantsuits in a dark color, paired with a conservative shirt or blouse and closed-toe shoes. Classic and unobtrusive accessories are acceptable.

- **Business casual.** This category is notoriously ambiguous and open to (mis)interpretation. It's also what generally comes to mind for many when thinking of work attire. This dress code is a step down from the business professional and suits aren't normally required. However, that doesn't mean jeans and sneakers will do. Dress pants, khakis or a skirt along with a collared shirt or dressy top are appropriate.

- **Casual attire:** Aside from no dress code at all, this is the most laidback the workplace gets. However, it's not without its idiosyncrasies and variations. Some casual dress codes say "yes" to jeans, shorts, leggings, sneakers and flip-flops, while others give them the thumbs down.

To make things even more complicated, some companies have what they call a smart casual dress code. Along with some of the relaxed

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flexibility of casual, you need to dress it up a bit and pull your outfit together to look "smart." You may be able to mix and match elements from other dress codes and add certain accessories to show your personality and style.

## SHOULD I WEAR THAT? ▾

If there's a written dress code policy at work, follow it. But even with a dress code outlined in the company handbook, it can be difficult to know whether an item is appropriate. The orange polka-dotted tie you received for Father's Day — it that okay to wear if your workplace is business professional? Is your new chunky, beaded necklace too over-the-top for the boardroom? And with warm weather comes even more potential fashion faux pas. Here are some helpful guidelines:

- **Look to the top.** Think of higher-ranking people — respected office manager, senior partner and so forth — in your workplace. Have you ever seen them wearing an article of clothing similar to what you're considering? If so, feel free to follow their lead. When in doubt, wear something else.

- **Check for distracting pieces**. Clingy dresses or Day-Glo golf pants will catch people's attention for all the wrong reasons. Be known for your stellar administrative skills, not your dubious choice in office attire. However, that bold tie or statement necklace, when paired

with a neutral outfit, might be just the thing to show off your distinct personality.

- **Less is more.** You should go above and beyond in your job — not your outfit. So go easy on the makeup, piercings, jewelry, cologne, hair products and animal prints. It's better to under-accessorize than to overdo it.

Keep it clean. Wrinkled, torn or stained garments won't fly in any work environment, even ones with a casual dress code. Before leaving the house each day, do a final check for details from head to toe. You should also keep it clean in the other sense by avoiding clothing that features profanity, images or other material that may offend your coworkers.

Be a good ambassador. As you're often the first person your company's clients or customers meet, you play a special role. This means that even if your employer has a casual dress code or none at all, you should still dress in a professional, appropriate manner and be well-groomed.

Remember that dressing professionally gives people credibility. If your office attire is inappropriate, you may not always receive the level of respect your achievements merit. Also, when considering people for promotions, companies tend to look for those who will make a good impression on business contacts, clients and alliance partners. How you dress plays a

role in how you are perceived. In fact, in a separate OfficeTeam survey (http://officeteam.rhi.mediaroom.com/ wackywardrobes), 80 percent of executives said clothing choices affect a worker's chances of earning a promotion.

Office attire can seem tricky, but it doesn't have to be. The best advice is to dress a little better than your colleagues without going overboard. That way you'll feel confident as you do your job, and your clothes will add to your professionalism rather than detract from it. 🅰

*Brandi Britton is a district president for OfficeTeam, the nation's leading staffing service specializing in the temporary placement of highly skilled administrative and office support professionals.*

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# Meeting Behavior:
## A Peek Behind the Curtain
by Tyler McCollum

P rofessionals attend meetings regularly. Fifty-one percent (51%) of those questioned responded that they attended more than 3 meetings a week and 33% responded that they attended more than 10 meetings a week. That is a LOT of meetings. Considering that most of us have jobs where meetings make only a portion of our required activities, people spend a lot of time in conference/huddle rooms. ▶▶

The takeaway is that meetings are an important component of conducting business and present a huge opportunity to improve organizational and operational productivity and output. If we - the AV industry - can help businesses conduct their meetings more efficiently and effectively, we will be helping them in a way that will make a big impact.

## TECHNICAL ISSUES KILL MEETING PRODUCTIVITY ⌄

Have you ever been in a meeting that couldn't start because the presenter couldn't get his or her presentation up on the projector? It's not a new story. In fact, 41% of respondents reported technical difficulties sharing to a display in over half of the meetings they attended. This is very telling; even with all of the advancements in AV technology, nearly half of meetings have some sort of issue with technology. This hampers the natural flow of information and collaborative processes in those meetings, creating inefficiency and negatively affecting productivity through longer-than-necessary meeting times.

## LACK OF PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IS A CHALLENGE FOR PRODUCTIVITY ⌄

Almost half of survey respondents (44.8%) indicated that getting meeting participants to engage and participate was the most common challenge of meetings they attended. Additionally, 44.2% of responders felt that only half of the meetings they attended were productive/effective.

These responses are likely related and paint a clear picture about what is going on in our meetings. Attendees do not feel that meetings are as productive as they should be based on the level of participation of those attending. We have all had the experience of sitting through a meeting which is wholly controlled by one-two people, where the rest of those attending are more or less just observers instead of participants. And unless the meeting presenters are REALLY interesting, it's hard to stay focused. These sort of scenarios play out every day in the workplace and are counterproductive to the collaborative process, which is likely connected to the fact that just over half of survey responses we collected indicated that meetings were productive more than 50% of the time.

## THE BEST MEETINGS ARE ALL BASED IN CONTENT SHARING ⌄

We found that 43% felt the most helpful way to facilitate productive/effective meetings is for content to be shared by multiple people on a display simultaneously. Second up, 33% of respondents reported faster meeting start times. An astounding number of responses (98.1%) indicated that they found it valuable when content was shared with the group via a display in the room. The most popular types of content to share via a display were images/pictures (61.9%), PDF documents (46.4%), and MS Office applications (45.2%). Many of us are visual learners. As a consequence of bringing

many different skillsets together in a room, having content which is shareable and viewable for the group is vital to the flow of information in the collaboration process.

Based on the results of this survey, we have been able to determine what hasn't worked in the past and what challenges companies face the AV industry as it strives to better serve it its customers. So what can be said about the current technology environment that we are in? Where can we read between the lines and find opportunities that aren't obvious?

We've chosen to think outside of the box in analyzing our recent survey. Another option we recommend is to investigate non-industry specific trends in technology to try and get a gauge what customers' needs are now and what they will evolve to in the future.

### MEETINGS ARE GOING MOBILE ⌄

BYOD is a hot term right now. Everyone from IT bloggers to school administrators to political figures (wink, wink Hillary Clinton) can be tied to the trend of mobile devices being frequently used in classrooms, conference rooms, huddle rooms... you name it. A large portion of us are tied to our mobile devices, so it should come as no surprise that we've come to expect these devices to be used as a medium for accessing content in the workplace as much as in our social lives.

Our recent survey substantiates this trend: In 2012 we conducted a survey in which we asked what items people typically bring into meetings them. We asked a similar question in 2015. By comparing the answers it is easy to interpret the results and relate them to the trends we see have been seeing in technology.

In 2012, 78.7% responded that they would typically bring pen and paper into meetings. In 2015, this percentage went down drastically to only 19.8%. In 2012, the number of Android tablets brought to meetings was 8.7%. In 2015, our results show these devices more than tripling in popularity (25.6%). We saw increases among all wireless devices, regardless of type, manufacturer, and operating system.

These trends reflect a monumental shift in our behavior with regard to mobile computing, and it's a shift that organizations ought to plan for, because it doesn't look like it's going to change any time soon.

## MOST MEETINGS ARE NOT BYOD FRIENDLY... YET ⌄

Unfortunately, only four percent (4%) of respondents answered that most of their meetings centered on shared content support that content being shared wirelessly. So most content-based meetings still don't support wireless content sharing, but rather they likely (still) depend on the video cable and/or the thumb drive. This indicates a gap between user behavior (the mobility/BYOD trend) and organizational support/infrastructure. In-room wireless collaboration technology either has not yet been deployed in these cases or is not yet considered a viable solution by decision makers for sharing content in these meeting spaces. So it's clear that the wireless collaboration market is still maturing, as well as the solutions. However in this case, a survey response that seems 'negative'

on the surface still has positive implications.

It's promising that the vast majority of survey responses reflect an inherent need for wireless collaboration products, and meeting goers seem to understand the value of content-based BYOD collaboration, even if the majority of decision-makers at the organizational level haven't gotten behind it yet. When there is strong user demand for a technology, organizations usually eventually fall in line. But the organizations that will benefit the most are those that identify the trend and act quickly to implement solutions, closing the gap between behavior and infrastructure support before it becomes a chasm of productivity. 🅰

*Mersive is a leading provider of wireless media streaming and collaboration software for corporate, education, and government markets. Mersive Solstice software products allow any number of users to simultaneously stream content from computers, tablets, and phones to any display - wirelessly from their own devices using their existing network.*

*Solstice facilitates collaboration among knowledge workers to foster engagement, facilitate decision-making, and improve productivity in meeting spaces and classrooms.*