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Printed dress in the corporate space

Soraiya Fuda | The Daily Telegraph | February 18, 2011 12:00AM

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IF YOU thought you couldn't wear your printed colourful dress to work - think again. This week our experts were given this Alannah Hill dress (pictured) as they offer their advice on how to wear it to a corporate office.

Every Friday, three fashion experts and a woman who simply loves clothes will be put to the test with a "mystery item" of clothing or an accessory - the What - as well as social event the mystery will be worn - to Where?. The "mystery" will often be in your own wardrobe or at least affordable and easily found in most shops and the event will be one which most of us get invited to from time to time. Our three experts are Sydney stylist Annalisa Armitage, designer Sally Smith, Sydney Confidential's Joel Christie and fashion lover / newsreader Michelle Taverniti.

Here are their tips.

Michelle Taverniti is a Newsreader and a fashion lover.

"A colourful print dress like this one is a good way to inject some colour into your work wardrobe, which for many can be full of black pieces.

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"For a fresh summery outfit, team the dress with a pair of grey closed-toe heels to pick up the colour in the dress, some glamorous sunnies and an oversized black bag - to fit all your books/notes/lap top of course!

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"The perfect thing about this dress is that it's tran-seasonal - wear it in the cooler months on top of black opaque tights, black heels or flats and a cardi or blazer.

"You can look fashionable and on trend at work, but I think it's very important to wear work-appropriate shoes!

"A pair of strappy stilettos might not be the best option and could cheapen the look, making it less professional. Also, don't go overboard with accessories - corporate chic has the maximum impact when kept to a minimum.

"An oversized black bag and some simple stud earrings and a watch - if you wear one - would suit this style perfectly. I think the print itself makes enough of a statement within a corporate environment.

"Wear this if you're headed to after-work drinks - swap your heels with something more glam and your bag for a clutch and you're good to go."

Annalisa Armitage is the Owner and Principal Stylist for My Image Consultant. Visit www.myimageconsultant.com.au for more expert advice.

"This dress has a very festive colour combination and pattern to be worn to a conservative corporate office.

"I want to add a fuchsia pink, black and grey fascinator, high fuchsia patent heels and a fuchsia bag, be taken ill from 'food poisoning' skip work and head off to Randwick, Flemington or any race course I can find so that I can play in this dress!

This perhaps gives you some indication of what I'm not going to suggest for you to wear, and be taken seriously, with this dress in the corporate arena.

"This said, it is a very pretty dress and if you have it in your wardrobe you should try to get the best cost-per-wear where possible. It looks like a respectable length for the office and it probably isn't too low cut.

"However, if any cleavage can be seen a black cami or singlet top can be worn to ensure modesty without taking anything away from the cut of the dress.

"The best way to make it look more corporate is to cover the sleeves (puffy sleeves are a little girlie) and as much of the material as possible.

"I would add a grey to tone it down and picking up on the other colour in the dress. A light weight short cardigan and grey belt to be worn over the top of the cardigan so that the original silhouette is retained would work well.

"The belt should be of quality leather, about six or seven centimetres wide without any features on the buckle and about the same colour as the cardigan.

"Shoes in grey would also work well. A covered toe, suede heel would be fabulous. In terms of jewellery, very simple and fine silver will complete the look without adding to the frivolity of the pattern."

Sally Smith is the Director and Designer of her own business called Sally Smith. To find out more about Sally visit sallysmith.com.au.

"This dress and the location really demand a gorgeous high heel, preferably black, closed in court, round toe, 40s style. The shoes will make or break this dress.

"The print is so colourful, it will make an impact in the office, brighten the day and make you feel happy. A little cropped cardi if the office air con is a little chill.

"Don't wear with flats or strappy. Too many accessories will overload what is already a very bold statement.

"The accessories need to be simple, simple, simple, or none at all. But, if you are an accessories girl, maybe just a minimal resin bracelet or two, picking up the colours in the print.

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"If you need to have a slightly more corporate look, a little, fitted black tailored jacket would work very nicely indeed over this dress."

Joel Christie is the Daily Telegraph's Sydney Confidential Reporter.

"This is a tad casual for work wear so dressing it up is a must. A tight blazer with defined shoulders in black and closed in heels (maybe a tan pump) would do the trick.

"In lieu of a jacket, patent black heels and black stockings.

"Avoid anything that would make it look any less formal, such as sandals, flats or gold jewellery. Keep it classy.

"Silver and/or diamonds would go nicely with this dress. A tasteful studded belt would also work around the waist.

"This is a perfect transition frock. After work get rid of the stockings and go bare legs to drinks or team with socks and sandals for a funky 'indie geddup'."

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