

SUIT UP: Companies put an end to casual Friday

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Hipsters, not unlike this one, are being forced to suit up in the office. Picture: Thinkstock

Source: news.com.au

SUIT up. That's the message bosses are sending their employees in an attempt to clamp down on work wear that has become a little too "casual".

Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer caused a stir earlier this week when she told employees **they must work in the office or quit.** (<http://www.news.com.au/business/companies/yahoo-employees-told-to-work-in-an-office-or-quit/story-fnda1bsz-1226584840131>)

And it seems the next step in the reversal of "flexible" office environments is casual Fridays, with an increasing number of Australian businesses banning the day or introducing staff clothing guidelines in an attempt to improve productivity and company image.

Sydney accounting firm Lomax Financial Group stopped casual Friday for its 50 staff after it came up against a number of problems.

"Those difficulties included people arriving in dress that management thought was over the mark and suddenly a client arriving unexpected on that day and that's just not a satisfactory position to be in," CEO Greg Lomax said.

Mr Lomax said a major problem was that everybody had a different understanding of what casual Friday meant.

"It's particularly difficult to place it because these days it's very fashionable to wear clothing with various holes and all sorts of things," he said.

"In the end we thought let's address this properly because how are we going to police it without having volumes and volumes of definitions of what was acceptable?"

Mr Lomax said his employees hadn't complained about the ban.

"People thought 'that makes sense and let's just get on with it'," he said.

Image consultant Annalisa Armitage said employers constantly complained to her that people were coming to work dressed in clothes they would wear "to the beach or the bar".

"Often employees are only told 'It's casual Friday', they don't see guidelines so they see other people wearing thongs and they think it's OK," Ms Armitage said.

"People just think the weekend starts early."

Corporate image expert Cosimina Nesci works with a number of organisations who are trying to re-establish a dress code in their offices.

"A lot of them are cutting back on casual Friday because they're still having to see clients and what they are wearing during the week is casual enough," Ms Nesci said.

Scroll down to see an example of an office clothing guide

Ms Nesci said it was happening most commonly in the finance industry, commercial property industry (in particular for females), and the IT industry where employees were interacting with clients.

Janette Ishiyama, owner of Image Consultants, said the shift back to formal dressing was being driven by companies who were losing out on business due to unprofessional office attire.

"Employees are representatives of the business and they don't look the part and it's actually affecting their bottom dollar and they're only noticing that now," she said.

"They're missing out on potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars."

Ettore Alterisio, director of corporate image firm The Alterisio Consultancy, interviewed 200 people in more than 30 organisations about their views on casual work-wear.

He found that 62 per cent of employees believe someone wearing professional business attire is more productive in their job than someone wearing casual work attire.

He also found that 72 per cent of employees think that to receive better recognition for achievements or work quality they needed to wear more professional clothing.

Ms Ishiyama said the bosses she worked with believed people were less productive when dressed in casual clothes.

"When dress is sloppy the level they are getting, the output they're getting, seems to be reduced," she said.

EXAMPLE CLOTHING GUIDELINES

Relaxed Business Dress – Friday (these are considered not appropriate)

Women

- Ripped clothing
- Casual slip on thongs or sandals, runners/sandshoes, ugg boots
- Shoestring straps or halter neck/backless
- Midriffs showing
- T-shirts with slogans
- Anything which might be construed as beach wear
- Shorts
- Cargo pants
- Mini skirts
- Sloppy or extremely loose clothing
- Tracksuits

Men

- Thongs, sandals, runners/sandshoes, ugg boots
- Ripped clothing

Collarless shirts eg. T Shirts
Shorts
Cargo pants
T-shirts with slogans
Anything which might be construed as beach wear
Sloppy or extremely loose clothing
Tracksuits

Modern Business Dress (Monday to Thursday)

Women

Business suits (pants or skirts, no mini skirts) with dress shoes and accessories
Tailored dresses or trousers
Skirts
Tailored shirts or blouses
Fine knitwear
Business style shoes or boots including open toed or sling back shoes if business style at the front
Hosiery optional

Men

Business suits
Ties
Tailored dress trousers, pressed with crease and belted
Smart collared business shirts
Jacket optional
Business socks
Dress shoes or boots