Dress Up Thursday?

by Steve Riordan

As I write this, I am wearing jeans, running shoes, and a ¾ zip athletic pullover over a long sleeve t-shirt at a client site this week and this is considered appropriate dress for this workplace. In contrast, several weeks ago I attended a retail conference and took the occasion to dress in business attire. These days I am much more likely to pack my travel bag with casual clothing than my business or even business casual attire.

Across all the clients I have visited throughout the last year, I have noticed that the workplace continues to slowly transition to a more and more casual dress code. We are in the midst of another shift in dressing in the workplace, especially in retail, footwear and apparel (RFA) companies. The first shift was from business attire to business casual. The next shift was from business casual to casual. We are now making the shift from casual to what is being coined as “athleisure”, taking performance and sporting goods apparel from companies such as Nike, Lululemon, and Under Armour beyond the gym or playing field for every day dressing. This transition is even influencing the workplace.

When I dressed for the conference, it was the first time in 2014 that I had worn a suit and tie. I put on my navy, chalk-striped suit with a nice pinpoint cotton French cuff dress shirt and cufflinks, and a contrasting tie that showed off just enough personality to distinguish the suit. It actually felt great to get dressed up. It was the same kind of feeling I remember having when I first got to wear jeans or khakis on casual Fridays back in the 90s.

So this got me to thinking. Why wouldn't the retailers and manufacturers of business attire latch onto the Throw Back Thursday trend and advocate for “Dress up Thursday”? Imagine the workplace filled with a Mad Men look in cubes, conference rooms and cafeterias. It would be great. It would have the effect that casual Fridays had back in the 90's. Employees would get a change of pace during the week and the retailers and manufacturers would get a business boost. I am not suggesting that Dress Up Thursdays (DUT?) would reverse the growing trend towards more casual clothing. However, in today’s consumer spending environment, every business can use every angle for differentiation and growth.

#dressupthursday

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What's your view? Add your question or comment
About the Author

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Steve has dedicated his entire 30-year career to serving retailers and their suppliers, first as a retail executive and more recently as a partner and practice leader for several prominent consulting firms.