

April 2010

Featured Article

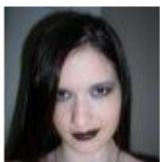
Interview Outfits: Quick Camouflage or Dutiful Deception?

The job interview: possibly the single most important step in getting a new job. Logically, you want to look your best. But if you aren't mainstream, your best might not be anything close to your future boss's expectations. Most of us know how to play the game and grab a nice corporate-appropriate outfit from the rack. But, assuming you get the job, what next? If company dress code allows for enough wiggle room to dress like yourself, do you revert? Or do you keep up appearances? Is dressing mainstream for an interview good self-promotion, or akin to lying on your resume?

Ideally, it shouldn't matter as long as you stay within company guidelines once hired. But pulling a switch like that right off the bat can set a bad precedence with your boss. There's a certain amount of deception involved in dressing your best - most people don't dress that way every day, regardless of being mainstream or not - and it's expected. But it shouldn't be exacerbated by revealing yourself to be the polar opposite of what was promised during the interview. Even employers can experience a type of buyer's remorse, and when you're a new employee you are there on the good faith of the person who hired you. It's more or less a probationary period and you don't want mess that up. Remember: first impressions are usually the lasting impressions, and the first day on the job is as much an extension of the first impression as the initial interview.

My advice is to take it slow so that you can make a positive work-based impression without being prejudged on your appearance. Use whatever outfit you wore to the interview as a starting point and gradually shift towards something that is more representative of yourself over time, taking care to stay within guidelines. Look to your coworkers for a point of comparison as well. If you find that the company you thought would be uptight is filled with relaxed employees wearing t-shirts, you can shift to casual wear much quicker.

Ultimately, the way you dress is up to you. You can decide to go to the interview with all your piercings in and you still might get hired. But the truth is, filtering by appearance is just one more of those short-cuts that employers use to weed out applicants. So if you decide to play the game, play nice. Give your employer and coworkers time to adjust so that you aren't tagged as disruptive. If you put your work ahead of your appearance, then your boss will be more likely to as well. And helping employers to get past that hurdle is good for everyone. It helps pave the way for a less discriminatory business market and eases tension in the workplace. It's all part of showing mainstreamers that we're just people too, and we can work as hard as the rest of them if we're just given the chance. So go and make your own chances.



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